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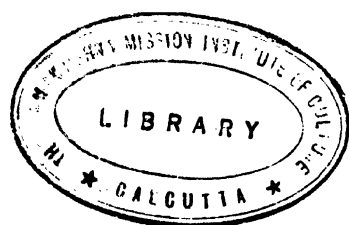
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# **AN OUTLINE OF THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR**



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TORONTO

# AN OUTLINE OF THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

1904, 1905

BY

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'THE PROBLEM OF NATIONAL DEFENCE'

VOLUME I

UP TO, AND INCLUDING, THE BATTLE  
OF LIAO-YANG

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
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1912









TO MY FRIEND  
COLONEL SIR LONSDALE HALE

The author desires to express his thanks to  
Colonel Sir Lonsdale Hale and Colonel H.  
Wylly, C.B., for the great assistance they have  
afforded him



## PREFACE

THE author, in his study of war, has been impressed by the numberless, apparently trifling, facts which appear in memoirs and reminiscences, but which seldom appear in histories, and which, nevertheless, often show up events in a perfectly new light. Some little point, some belief held at the time by one of the combatants, will often account for what is otherwise unaccountable; and will show that what appears on the surface to have been a foolish action was, in reality, the wisest which could have been adopted in the circumstances. Napoleon has commonly been criticised for his "waste of time" on the morning of Waterloo. If, however, the fact be remembered that he believed that the Prussian army was in full retreat on Prussia, and that he had Wellington's army alone to deal with, a different complexion is placed on the matter. Supposing he had been correct in his belief, what effect would the parade of his tremendous power have had on the nerves of Wellington's heterogeneous army? Is it not probable that a part, the greater part, of that army would have fled at the first onset? By what means did Joshua cause the collapse of the walls of Jericho?

It is often the case that histories fail to take into account the state of mind, the nervous tension, the hopes and fears of the hostile commanders, treating them as if they were not flesh and blood, but mere automatons, mechanical contrivances that required neither food nor drink nor sleep, that possessed neither brains, stomachs, nor nerves. The friction which invariably exists even in the most highly trained and patriotic forces, and which is so often responsible for indecision and irresolution, and so, for defeat, is often lightly dismissed in a single sentence. So also, very often, is the question of morale, together with the causes of the loss of it. The reason is that, in every war, there is such a vast mass of material that even the most complete history cannot hope to deal fully with it. One aspect or another must be entirely eliminated in order that the remainder may be fully treated; and it is, accordingly, the "personal equation" which is generally lost sight of.

The admirable French official history of the Franco-German War of 1870-1, however, gives an insight to the tremendous influence exercised on the fate of armies by the mental condition of, and the play of wits between, the opposing commanders.

It teaches one, for instance, a little point that was overlooked, or, indeed, unknown—except to the Germans—that the fate of the French armies in 1870 was largely due to a false belief which existed in the minds of certain of the French leaders. They apparently believed—and all their information pointed to it—that a German army was marching from Luxem-

bourg by Thionville on Metz. Hence the extreme nervousness displayed by the French Emperor. Hence, probably, his failure to reinforce General Frossard, and attack the German advanced guards, at Spicheren. Hence, also, Bazaine's failure to utilise the northern roads for his retreat through Metz; and hence, perhaps, his defeat at Gravelotte and investment in the fortress. On the eve of Gravelotte each French corps threw out outposts to the north-east, expecting to be attacked from that direction!

Or, let us give another example from this same war. In the spring of 1870 Moltke wrote a pamphlet advocating the use of "Army Advanced Guards," a cleverly written article designed to show that it was an admirable thing to push forward a powerful detachment to obtain information and cover the mobilisation and concentration of an army. The French evidently accepted this idea, and when war was declared we see them push forward two "Strategic Advanced Guards" to Weissembourg and Spicheren, the latter of which was termed by the Emperor Louis Napoleon "the eye of the army." Moltke, on the other hand, far from adopting his own suggestions, carefully warned his army commanders to avoid, at all costs, the risk of having detachments destroyed. But now comes the interesting point. During the mobilisation and concentration of the hostile armies, constant information reached the French telling them that there was a German "Advanced Guard" posted at Dudweiler, a few miles east of Saarbrücken, far from all support, and within easy reach of the French

army which was concentrating between Metz and the Saar. The reported strength of this advanced guard varied between 40,000 and 200,000 men; but as the main German concentration was also reported to be taking place on the Rhine at Mainz, its strength could not be more than about 100,000 men—a choice mouthful for the French army. The French only refrained from crossing the Saar to attack this strategic advanced guard on account of the reports of their commissaries to the effect that it would have exhausted all the supplies on the right bank of the river, and that the French army, in view of its lack of transport, would be unable to subsist itself. Now, this German strategic advanced guard did not exist. There were no troops there at all—with the exception of a few cavalry squadrons and infantry outposts watching the line of the Saar, doubtless in order to give early information of the expected French advance across the river. Are we to believe that Moltke's pamphlet and the false information the French received are merely curious coincidences? If Moltke could have induced the unwieldy French army, or an important part of it, to cross to the right bank of the Saar, he would have held it at his mercy. In this connection, also, we must not forget the advice given to the Emperor Napoleon by an Austrian archduke, in whom he had great faith, urging him to cross the Saar in view of the hoped-for Austrian assistance—"to assume the offensive on the right bank of the Saar, if only for a few days."

Was the information which the French received in these two instances—and in many others—due entirely to Fortune? Or had it been deliberately concocted by the Germans? If so, how was it accomplished? What branch of the General Staff fabricated the false information to be sent to the enemy, and in what manner was it sent? What nature of organisation was required? How many years were necessary in which to perfect that organisation? What sums of secret service money had been expended on it in peace time? We know from Stieber's *Memoirs* that the German secret service system had been established on the projected "lines of invasion," and was, apparently, in working order some eighteen months before the war commenced; while, from the French official account, it appears that the French neglected to organise their system until the outbreak of war. These two facts in themselves are sufficient explanation of the admirable information obtained by the Germans at the outset of hostilities, and the almost uniformly false information obtained by the French.

One understands more clearly after a careful study of the French official account of the Franco-German War the full meaning, and the truth, of Napoleon's maxim that "in war one man is everything, the rest are nothing"; for it is evident that the German victory was due, in great measure, to the manner in which Moltke was able to outwit the Emperor Louis Napoleon.

It is, however, wise to recognise that the above work



owes its existence to certain fortuitous circumstances. But for the revolution in France, and the overthrow of the reigning dynasty, it would never have appeared. The leaders of a nation are responsible for defeat; and their chief concern after defeat is, if history speaks true, to screen themselves, to gloss over their mistakes, and usually to thrust the blame on to the shoulders of subordinates. Their last desire is that the truth should be divulged. It is only when a revolution has occurred, and the ruling classes have been definitely overthrown, that their successors are willing and even anxious for the truth to appear in order that their predecessors may be further discredited. But, even so, the whole truth is not always known, for there may be certain lessons to be drawn which the new regime are by no means anxious to see disseminated. Thus, the lesson which stands out most clearly, perhaps, from the Franco-German War, is the fact that before the French march to Sedan, MacMahon clearly owed it to his country and to the army under his command to disobey deliberately the orders, or suggestions, which he had received from the Minister of War and the Ministry in Paris. But no ministry would willingly see such an idea established in an army, and hence it is, probably, that the French official account of the war touches on this matter with a very light hand, and carefully avoids drawing the logical conclusion.

The victor in war will seldom disclose the full facts; for, in doing so, he must disclose his methods, and it is wise to keep those methods secret in order

that they may again, if necessary, be employed with success. The Germans believed after 1871 that another war with France must shortly occur; and while it was desirable to ascertain and rectify their own failings, it was undesirable to expose those weaknesses to their enemies. Certainly, it was undesirable to mention the information on which they acted or the sources from which they obtained it. Hence the German official account of the Franco-German War is by no means perfectly frank or complete—as has become evident only since the French official account has been published.

When shall we arrive at the inner truth of the Russo-Japanese War? Will the Japanese disclose the real secrets of their success? No, not if they are wise. Will the Russians disclose the real secrets of their failure? It is improbable. We are still, and likely to remain, in the dark as regards the inner history of this war, except for the side-lights thrown on it by the frank utterances of enraged subordinates. We must either discover this inner history for ourselves, or fail to learn lessons which may, nevertheless, be vital to our own safety in the near future.

For these reasons it has seemed to the author that there exists a vast, practically unwritten, and little known history of every war; that it is this unwritten history which is the very soul of war, and that the study of it is essential to a just comprehension of the methods by which war should be conducted. His study of the Russo-Japanese War has confirmed him in this belief.

## Preface

A knowledge of this unwritten history is vital to success in modern warfare. The French in 1870 and the Russians in 1904 were misled, surprised, and, consequently, brought to the verge of defeat before ever a shot was fired.

As it appears to him that but little thought is given to this subject in the British army or nation, and as he is convinced that ignorance of it will certainly lead to defeat, on sea as on land, when the nation meets its highly trained adversary, he has endeavoured in the following pages to draw attention to it. Doubtless his facts are often wrong, and, doubtless, he has overlooked many other essential facts; and, consequently, his deductions and inferences will constantly be at fault; but his object is to induce men with better brains than his own to give close study to this, in his view, essential aspect of war.

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## DIARY OF EVENTS

- 1850. Japanese ports thrown open to trade by the United States and other nations : Revolution in Japan.
- 1860. British and French forces occupy Peking : Russia obtains Vladivostok from China.
- 1861. Russia attempts to occupy Tsushima : Great Britain protests.
- 1863. British and French troops occupy Yokohama.
- 1866. Austro-Prussian War.
- 1867. Compulsory service introduced into part of Japan.
- 1870. Franco-German War.
- 1871. Revolution in Japan terminated : Mikado supreme, Japan commences to organise as nation in arms.
- 1875. British and French troops evacuate Yokohama : Southern Saghalien ceded to Russia by Japan.
- 1879. Austro-German alliance.
- 1882. Great Britain occupies Egypt : friction between Great Britain and France.
- 1885. Friction between Japan and China : and between Great Britain and Russia : Russia endeavours to obtain Port Lazarev in Korea and simultaneously encroaches on Afghan frontier : Great Britain occupies, but again evacuates, Port Hamilton in Korean Straits.
- 1887. Italy joins Austro-German alliance : Kiel canal commenced.
- 1891. Siberian railway commenced.
- 1894. Franco-Russian alliance : Korean rebellion : Chinese and Japanese intervene : Chino-Japanese War.
- 1895. Japanese victorious : cession of Port Arthur to Japan : Russia mobilises in Far East : first plan of campaign



# Diary of Events

- against Japan drawn up: obtains assistance from France and Germany: evacuation of Port Arthur by Japan.
1896. Russia obtains concession of territory in northern Manchuria: Germans seize Kiao-chao: diplomatic contest between Russia and Japan relative to Korea commences: Russia obtains concession to exploit forests in Northern Korea.
1897. Russian fleet appears at Port Arthur.
1898. Russia obtains Port Arthur and Talienwan on lease for twenty-five years: commences construction of railway Port Arthur—Harbin: British obtain lease of territory adjacent to Hong-Kong: Wei-hai-wei handed over by Japanese to British: war between Spain and United States.
1899. Boxer rebellion: South African War commences.
1900. Boxer rebellion terminates.
1902. Anglo-Japanese alliance: South African War terminates: Franco-Russian agreement relative to Far East: Russo-Chinese treaty by which Russia engages to evacuate Manchuria: Russia suspends evacuation.
1903. Russian fleet in Far East reinforced: Admiral Alexiev appointed Viceroy of Far East: Russia makes demands on China: Great Britain, United States and Japan protest: China refuses demands: Japan opens question of evacuation of Manchuria: Russia occupies mouth of Yalu: Russia seizes Mukden.
- 1904.—
- January 28th. Russia orders mobilisation in Far East.
- February 4th. Russian fleet leaves Port Arthur harbour and anchors in roadstead: Japanese cabinet decide on war: ambassador at St. Petersburg directed to break off negotiations: Japanese fleet sails from Sasebo to attack Russian fleet: Japanese order mobilisation and proclaim martial law.
- 8th. Japanese seize Seoul: two Russian ships of war destroyed at Chemulpo.
- 8th–9th. Russian fleet at Port Arthur attacked by Japanese torpedo flotillas.

# Diary of Events

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- 9th. Russian fleet bombarded by Japanese fleet.
- 10th. Both nations declare war.
- 14th. Second attack on Russian fleet by Japanese torpedo flotillas.
- 15th. General Kuropatkin, Russian Minister of War, produces plan of campaign.
- 20th. General Kuropatkin appointed to command Manchurian army.
- 21st. 12th Japanese Division lands at Chemulpo and seizes Ping-Yang.
- 23rd-24th. First attempt to block Port Arthur.
- 24th-25th. Third attack on Russian fleet by Japanese torpedo flotillas.
- March 9th. Admiral Makarov reaches Port Arthur.
- 10th. Japanese fleet bombards Port Arthur: Japanese Guard and 2nd Divisions commence disembarkation at Chinampo in Korea.
- 12th. General Kuropatkin leaves St. Petersburg.
- 18th. Japanese occupy Anju in Korea.
- 28th. First land action at Tiessu in Korea, General Kuropatkin arrives at Liao-yang and reinforces Yalu detachment.
- 29th. Guard and 2nd Japanese Divisions complete disembarkation.
- April 13th. Russian fleet makes sortie from Port Arthur: Russian flagship sunk: Death of Admiral Makarov.
- 15th. Viceroy arrives at Port Arthur and assumes command of fleet.
- 21st. 1st Japanese Army concentrated at Wiju in Korea.
- 22nd. General Sasulitch takes command of Yalu detachment.
- May 1st. Battle of the Yalu.
- 2nd-3rd. Second attempt to block Port Arthur.
- 5th. 2nd Japanese Army commences to land at Pi-tzu-wo: Viceroy leaves Port Arthur.
- 6th. 1st Army occupies Feng-huang-Cheng.
- 13th. 35,000 troops of 2nd Japanese Army landed.
- 14th. 2nd Army commences to move.
- 15th. Two Japanese battleships sunk by mines: one Japanese second-class cruiser rammed and sunk.
- 16th. Japanese occupy Mount Sampson and Pu-lan-tien.

## Diary of Events

- May 19th. 10th Division (4th Army) commences o land at Ta-Ku-Shan.
- 21st. 11th Division commences disembarkation at Pi-tzu-wo.
- 25th. First assault on Chin-chou.
- 26th. Second assault on Chin-chou and Battle of Nan-shan.
- 27th. Japanese occupy Dalny.
- 28th. Stakelberg ordered verbally to assume offensive to relieve Port Arthur: 1st Japanese Army occupies Ai-yang-Cheng.
- 30th. 11th Division completes disembarkation.
- June 2nd. 1st and 4th Japanese Armies ordered to assume offensive: 3rd Japanese Army formed for attack on Port Arthur.
- 5th. Stakelberg reaches Telissu: Kuropatkin hears of advance of 4th Japanese Army.
- 7th. 1st Army demonstrates and occupies Sai-ma-chi: Japanese gunboats bombard coast line at Kaiping: Stakelberg receives written instructions: his advance deferred.
- 8th. Bombardment of coast line at Kaiping continued: 4th Army (10th Division) occupies Hsiu-yen.
- 9th. 10th Division completes disembarkation.
- 11th. Stakelberg receives permission to advance.
- 13th. Stakelberg hears of advance of 2nd Japanese Army: 2nd Japanese Army occupies Wa-fang-tien.
- 14th and 15th. Battle of Telissu.
- 16th-18th. Count Keller demonstrates against Feng-huang-Cheng.
- 19th. General Rennenkampf marches to demonstrate against Ai-yang-Cheng: Japanese at Ai-yang-Cheng reinforced.
- 19th-21st. 2nd Japanese Army advances to Hsiung-yao-Cheng: Japanese armies directed to be in readiness to advance by 5th July.
- 21st. Advance of 2nd Japanese Army suspended for lack of supplies.
- 22nd. Rennenkampf attacks Japanese at Ai-yang-Cheng and retreats.
- 23rd. Sortie of Russian fleet from Port Arthur: 1st Reserve Japanese Brigade completes disembarkation at Dalny.

- 24th. Japanese Imperial Headquarters direct armies to suspend advance and defer battle of Liao-yang till after rainy season.
- 25th. 4th Army advances.
- 26th. 1st Army advances: Russian advanced troops driven back on to "Position of Passes" at Port Arthur by 3rd Army: troops withdrawn from Count Keller and sent to Hai-Cheng.
- 27th. 4th Army attacks and captures Ta-ling Passes: heavy rain commences in Fen-shui-ling Mountains.
- 30th. 1st Army seizes Mo-tien-ling Passes: also occupies Saima-chi.
- July 3rd. 10th Reserve Brigade commences disembarkation at Ta-Ku-Shan.
- 3rd-5th. Sortie on land by Port Arthur garrison.
- 4th. Russian reconnaissance in force against Mo-tien-ling.
- 5th. Rain ceases.
- 6th. Marshal Oyama leaves Japan for Kaiping: 2nd Japanese Army commences advance on Kaiping.
- Between 23rd June and 26th July. 9th Japanese Division, 4th Reserve Brigade, and numerous field and siege guns landed at Dalny.
- Between 23rd June and 7th August. Correspondence between Viceroy and Admiral Vitgeft, commanding fleet in Port Arthur.
- July 8th. 2nd Japanese Army occupies Kaiping: Marshal Oyama arrives at Kaiping.
- 9th. 2nd Japanese Army attacks Russians north of Kaiping: Russian rear guard retreats.
- 9th-10th. 4th Japanese Army demonstrates towards Kaiping and Hsi-mu-Cheng.
- 17th. Count Keller attacks Mo-tien-ling and is repulsed.
- 18th-19th. Japanese attack and capture Chiao-tou.
- 20th. General Kuropatkin interviews Viceroy at Mukden.
- 21st. General Kuropatkin returns to Liao-yang and openly expresses intention to assume offensive with Eastern Group.
- 22nd. Movement of Russian troops from reserve at Liao-yang to join Eastern Group commences: Japanese Guard Brigade leaves 4th Army to rejoin 1st Army.

## Diary of Events

- July 23rd. 2nd Japanese Army advances on Ta-shih-chiao: report reaches General Kuropatkin that 4th Army is advancing: General Kuropatkin joins Eastern Group.
- 24th. 4th Japanese Army demonstrates: 10th Corps concentrated on Lan River: Battle of Ta-shih-chiao commences: Russian Vladivostok cruiser squadron appears off Yokohama.
- 25th. Battle of Ta-shih-chiao: Russians retreat: 2nd Army occupies Ying-Kou: General Kuropatkin leaves Eastern Group and joins Southern Group at Hai-Cheng.
- 26th. Japanese assault on the "Position of the Passes" at Port Arthur commences.
- 27th. 4th Army reconnoitres 2nd Siberians at Hsi-mu-Cheng.
- 28th. 5th Japanese Division leaves 2nd Army to join 4th Army: 10th Corps commences advance on Chiao-tou.
- 29th. Advance of 10th Corps suspended to await reinforcements: "Position of the Passes" at Port Arthur captured.
- 30th. Wolf Hills at Port Arthur captured.
- 31st. 4th Army attacks 2nd Siberians at Hsi-mu-Cheng: 1st Army attacks 10th Corps at Yu-sku-ling, and Count Keller's force at Yang-tzu-ling: Russians retreat.
- August 7th. Bombardment of Port Arthur from land-side commences: Manchurian rainy season commences.
- 10th. Vladivostok cruiser squadron sails: Port Arthur fleet sails, attacked by Japanese, defeated, and remnants driven back into Port Arthur.
- 11th. Japanese offer safe conduct to non-combatants in Port Arthur.
- 14th. Vladivostok cruiser squadron attacked: 'Rurik' sunk.
- 16th. Japanese demand surrender of Port Arthur.
- 19th. First general assault on Port Arthur commences.
- 23rd. Kuropatkin alters his plans: Oyama issues orders to attack.
- 24th. First assault on Port Arthur repulsed.
- 25th. Reconnaissance by Liubavin.
- 26th. Battle of Liao-yang commences: combats of Lang-tzu-shan and An-ping.

## Diary of Events

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27th-28th. Russians retreat into "advanced positions" at Liao-yang.

29th. Japanese reconnoitre Russians at Liao-yang and prepare to cross the Tai-tzu River.

30th. Japanese attack Russians at Liao-yang: repulse of Japanese at Port Arthur known in Russian field army.

31st. Japanese continue attack at Liao-yang and cross Tai-tzu.

31st (night). Russians retreat into main defences at Liao-yang and commence to concentrate force for offensive on right bank of Tai-tzu.

September 1st. Japanese capture Manju-Yama.

2nd. Japanese attack Liao-yang: defeat Orlov and capture Yen-tai Mines: Russian counter-attack on Manju-Yama repulsed.

2nd-3rd (night). Kuropatkin decides to retreat.

3rd-7th. Russians retreat to Mukden.



## CHAPTER I.

### CAUSES OF THE WAR.

WAR between two great nations which involves the lives, happiness, and well-being of perhaps a hundred millions of human beings, must of necessity constitute an epoch in the history of the human race. It must affect not only the immediate and future interests of the combatants, but materially modify the intricate problems by which each civilised nation in the world is confronted. Such a cataclysm may, possibly, have causes altogether beyond the control of the nations engaged ; and the attitude of neutral nations must necessarily exercise a profound influence on the strategy of the combatants. As examples let us mention that, in the War of Secession in America, the Southern States refrained from assuming the offensive, and so, as it turned out, cast away their hopes of victory, from a desire to prove to neutral nations that they were acting in self-defence. And, in 1870, the Emperor Napoleon III., hoping to the very last for the assistance of Austria and Italy, refused to discard his impossible offensive projects until too late. Hence, as a foundation for the study of any war, it becomes essential to grasp—or

A 1



## Causes of the War

endeavour to grasp—the groupings of the neutral powers together with the aims and objects of these groups and of the individual nations comprising them, as well as the interests of the combatants actually engaged in war.

So, before we describe the events which led up to the war in the Far East, let us glance at the general international situation, and the trend of events throughout the world during the nineteenth century, and examine if, perchance, they throw any light upon the struggle with which we are immediately concerned.

In 1789 history shows us the spectacle of a great nation, the French, the foremost nation of the day, involved in revolution. A few years later this nation, attacked by its neighbours, rose in its wrath, a nation in arms; and, led by the greatest military genius of modern ages, crushed its opponents. Finally, overwhelmed by numbers, it succumbed, but without material loss of territory or prestige.

But one of its antagonists, on which it had trampled and which had been humiliated to the dust, had learnt some lessons—the lessons that war is a terrible thing, that defeat in war is the most terrible form of it, that might is right in the world of nations, that military strength grants the power, if not to avoid war, then to win victory, and that military strength can be assured only if a whole nation devotes its thoughts in times of peace to preparation for war. That nation copied its conqueror, improving on his methods; and there arose, bit by bit, through many

years of thought, arduous toil, and the self-sacrifice of individuals, the modern machine of war, the scientifically organized "nation in arms."

In 1866 and 1870 that machine of war, the Prussian nation, struck down two of its neighbours,—whose military systems were still of the bye-gone type—and laid the firm foundation of the present German Empire.

With these object lessons before them other civilised nations were not slow to take warning. With the exception of Great Britain and the United States, they commenced, most earnestly, the task of organising themselves as machines of war.

After the Franco-German war of 1870-71 France set to work to repair the ravages of defeat and to reorganise her forces. Germany, fearing a war of revenge on the part of France, sought as a defensive measure, to form alliances with Austria and Russia; and, between 1873 and 1875, becoming alarmed, it is said, at French progress, proposed to attack France and complete the work of 1871. The intervention of Russia and Great Britain, however, obliged her to relinquish her purpose.

Such was the situation when, in 1877, war broke out between Russia and Turkey. During the previous two centuries Russia had gradually forced back the Turks into the Balkan Peninsula and south of the Caucasus. She now sought, in pursuance of the leading idea of her national strategy, the acquisition of an ice-free port, to finally thrust the Turks from Europe, and to seize Constantinople. In pursuit of

this ambition, however, she trenched on the interests of Great Britain and Austria; for the former could by no means brook the establishment of a great power so close to the flank of one of her principal trade routes to India; while the latter, having been thrust from Germany, had already turned her attention to the Balkan Peninsula. By the action of these two nations Russia was obliged to submit the terms which she had imposed on Turkey to the decision of the Powers at the Berlin Conference of 1878. Germany was now in a dilemma; for if she supported Russia she must incur the hostility of Austria and Great Britain; whereas if she supported Austria she must incur the hostility of Russia. She evidently preferred the latter course. For an Austrian alliance was of infinitely more value to Germany than an alliance with Russia. A large portion of the Austrian territories was peopled by Germans; and in the event of the disintegration of the Austrian empire—a contingency which at that time appeared to be probable—this German population would be likely to throw in its lot with the German empire, especially if it had come to regard that empire as a close friend. But, in addition, the situation of Austria rendered her friendship necessary; for through Austria egress could be obtained to the Adriatic, and so to the Mediterranean. Hence a close offensive and defensive alliance between Germany and Austria would establish a strong central power in Europe, with outlets in the Baltic, the North Sea, and the Mediterranean. Such a power should dominate

Europe, and, consequently, assure to the two peoples security and comfort, the one granting immunity from attack, the other from internal conflict. It was evidently with the idea of an ultimate alliance that Prussia had granted Austria such easy terms after the defeat of the latter in 1866.

But with the rise of friction between Germany and Russia came the opportunity of France, which nation had endeavoured with feverish earnestness to render herself strong enough to withstand the expected German attack. She endeavoured to form an alliance with Russia ; but the one nation was a republic, and the other an absolute monarchy ; and her efforts were only finally crowned with success in 1894. In the meantime, however, Germany reaped the advantages of the support she had afforded to Austria, and concluded a close offensive and defensive alliance with that country in 1879. Nevertheless, France was already too strong to be lightly attacked ; and her gallant efforts at national regeneration had won her the sympathy of both Russia and Great Britain. Russia, indeed, at this time regarded Germany with profound suspicion ; and it was certain that that suspicion would develop into open hostility in the event of an unprovoked attack upon France. Germany now sought successfully to divert French attention from her eastern frontier to Africa, with the result that friction arose between France and Great Britain, and France and Italy, which latter nation joined the German alliance in 1887.

Russia, in the meantime, her progress towards

Constantinople having been finally checked, turned her chief attention to the Persian Gulf, the frontier of India, and the Far East. In each of these three localities she came face to face with Great Britain. Great Britain, indeed, feared the expansion of this vast and, apparently, overwhelming power if once it could obtain an outlet to the trade route between Great Britain and India; and she, consequently, stood firmly in the way of the attainment of the Russian national object.

It will thus be seen that Europe was formed into two hostile camps, Germany, Austria, and Italy opposed to Russia and France. Great Britain, fulfilling her historic rôle of attempting to maintain the balance of power in Europe, refused to join either; but her sympathies lay with the Triple Alliance, inasmuch as her fears had been aroused by the activity of France in North and West Africa, and of Russia in Central and Eastern Asia. The vast and undeveloped wealth in these two continents aroused the cupidity, and therefore the jealousy, of European nations. Competition in colonisation ensued between Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy, each nation seeking to forestall its neighbours and establish its claims to territories which promised wealth, and which were inhabited by savage or decadent peoples.

In Asia there existed a vast nation, the Chinese, whose power was practically unknown. This ignorance, so long as it lasted, served to check European rapacity. But it did not last long. Russia had,

indeed, been fully aware for many years that China was practically unable to defend itself, that, though a vast, it was, apparently, a moribund empire, whose territories and wealth would ultimately fall to the most aggressive and energetic of its neighbours. As early as 1860, when the forces of Great Britain and France occupied Peking, Russia had obtained from China the cession of a strip of coast-line extending from the River Amur to the frontier of Korea; and it was near the southern extremity of this territory that Vladivostok was situated.

Vladivostok possessed a fine harbour; but, unfortunately, it was ice-bound from December to March. Nevertheless, the possession of this harbour and the neighbouring territory on the left bank of the Amur afforded a base from which Russia might gradually extend her power southwards. And to the south of Vladivostok lay regions—Manchuria and Korea—peopled by uncivilised, helpless, or dying races, doomed to be absorbed sooner or later by some nation with greater virility and purpose in life. Korea was under the nominal suzerainty of China; but that nation was, as the Russians knew well, in no condition to defend even its own territorial integrity.

Thus, there was nothing to stop the onward march of Russia to the southward, where great, if undeveloped, wealth awaited her, to say nothing of numerous ice-free ports—Gensan, Masampo, and Chemulpo in Korea; Port Arthur, Dalny, and Ta-lien-Wan in Manchuria. It was necessary, however, in

the first instance, to establish her power firmly at Vladivostok. But that harbour is situated somewhat like Sevastopol, at the head of an inland sea, and could never be of much value unless the outlets to that sea were in Russian hands. These outlets were in possession of the Japanese.

This latter nation, like the Chinese and Koreans, had sought, during untold centuries, to live its own life in its own way, apart from the world of progressive nations. But the attempt had proved futile; for, in 1853, a naval squadron of the United States entered its ports and extorted a treaty, obliging the inhabitants to open up their country to trade. Civil war immediately broke out in Japan; and the Japanese nation quickly became helpless to resist aggression. The example of the United States was followed by the Russians, the Dutch, British, French, Portuguese, Prussians, Italians, Danes, and even the Swiss. By these the various Japanese ports were thrown open to trade.

In 1861 the Russians occupied the Island of Tsushima in the Korean Straits. Great Britain immediately protested, despatching a naval squadron to the scene, with the result that the Russians evacuated the island.

In 1863, fearing further enterprises on the part of Russia, and in order to safeguard the lives and interests of Europeans, Great Britain and France despatched a military force to occupy Yokohama. It will be seen that the nations of the world were already commencing to struggle for the trade and

## Historical Sketch

territory of this helpless nation in the Far East. There is no room for helpless nations in this world—in temperate climates, at least.

These insults had, however, sunk deep into the heart of the proud islanders; they had learned that a nation which is not prepared to defend itself can expect but little forbearance on the part of other nations. It was, accordingly, this venerable but antiquated people in the Far East which was the very first to learn the tremendous lessons conveyed by the victories of Prussia in 1866 and 1870—the only nation, indeed, which had learnt from the war of 1866. As early as 1867 universal military training was introduced into a section of the Japanese nation; and the revolution which had been in progress for years was brought to an abrupt and successful conclusion. The Japanese people, no longer a conglomeration of semi-independent states, but, now, a nation with a strong central government under the Mikado, commenced, in 1871, to constitute itself a modern machine of war. But an efficient military system cannot be devised and brought into being in a day, even when all men are only too willing to serve their country. Many years must be devoted to thought, to organisation, to training, and to the education of the people before a modern nation in arms can be built up; and, before Japan's military system had been rendered efficient, part of the Island of Saghalien was, in 1875, wrested from her by the Russians.

Japan had, however, left no stone unturned in her efforts to modernise herself and render herself fitted



to compete with the great nations of the world in the struggle for existence. She had despatched her emissaries to all civilised nations to study their systems of government and administration, and, not less, their military and naval systems, and, even, their religions. She endeavoured to select the best points of each nation, and adopted them herself, ruthlessly uprooting her own antiquated or inefficient methods when necessary, but retaining those of them which were calculated to prove of value to her. So promising were her efforts to introduce a modern administration that in 1875 the British and French troops evacuated Yokohama. But this regeneration of a nation passed almost unheeded by the world in general; and the popular conception of the Japanese was still that of a half-savage, comparatively harmless, but wholly interesting people.

When, in 1875, the Japanese were forced to cede the southern portion of Saghalien to the Russians, the aggressive intentions of the latter became only too apparent; and the fears of the Japanese were aroused. Under existing conditions Japan had no right to intervene if the Russians obtained a cession of Korean territory from the Chinese. It was thus necessary for her to establish such a right. Thereupon ensued a prolonged diplomatic dispute between Japan and China as to which nation should exercise paramount influence in Korea. At one time Japanese influence was in the ascendant; at another that of China. In 1885 the relations between China and Japan were seriously strained; and Russia endeavoured to utilise

the opportunity and obtain a lease of Port Lazarev in Korea. At the same time, in order to distract the attention of Great Britain, Russia encroached on the Afghan frontier. For a time there was danger of war between Russia and Great Britain, and, in order to check Russia's designs in the Far East, Great Britain occupied Port Hamilton in the Korean Straits. Difficulties were, however, smoothed over, and Great Britain again evacuated Port Hamilton.

It had become evident to the Russians that, if they were to obtain full value from their position in the Far East, they must improve their communications through Siberia; and, in 1891, the construction of the great Siberian railway to Vladivostok was commenced. But six thousand miles of railway is a vast undertaking; and many years were to elapse before the task could be completed.

In 1894 the Koreans rebelled against their government. The rebellion was suppressed by Chinese and Japanese troops. The Japanese refused to evacuate the country until certain reforms should be introduced. To this the Chinese objected, denying the right of the Japanese to intervene. As a result war broke out between China and Japan.

At its outset this war was popularly regarded as the height of absurdity. Here were two nations, two anachronisms, about to fight! The one, a little known, small, interesting, intelligent, harmless people, who, it was thought, still boasted an antiquated civilisation and equally antiquated institutions, organised on the feudal system of the mediaeval ages, its warriors

fighting with the swords of their ancestors, disguising themselves in horrific aspect with a view to striking terror into their enemies, but better known for the pretty little pictures of birds which they painted upon silk screens! The other, vast, its numbers incalculable, equally harmless as a whole, equally antiquated, equally helpless, not so intelligent, not so interesting, its soldiers armed with umbrellas, painting pictures of impossible demons on earthenware jars, and given to smoking opium! Such was, broadly, the popular conception of these two nations. It was as though two very aged spinster ladies, sisters, neither of whom had ever, within the memory of man, done anything more dashing than to make little flannel waistcoats for the little nigger children in Central Africa, had suddenly fallen to fisticuffs. It was laughable, if pathetic!

But, quickly, fuller knowledge of the Japanese spread. It was said that here was a semi-civilised nation which had modernised itself; amusement gave place to wonderment, then, to respect. For the Japanese were everywhere victorious, practically destroying the Chinese fleet, defeating the Chinese army in several engagements, capturing a fortress by assault, and dictating terms to its enormous, but unwieldy and unready, adversary.

A notable feature of this war—a point worth bearing in mind—was that the Japanese had commenced hostilities without declaration of war. China sued for peace, recognising the complete independence of Korea, ceding Formosa and the Liao Tung pen-

insula (on which Port Arthur is situated) to Japan, and agreeing to pay an indemnity of £25,000,000. Wei-hai-Wei was to remain in Japanese hands until the indemnity should be paid.

Now let us glance, from the Russian point of view, at this entirely novel situation which had arisen. Let us bear in mind that the main object of Russian policy had been, for some centuries, the acquisition of an ice-free port. Her advance towards the eastern Mediterranean had first been checked, then finally stopped in 1878, by the formation of the kingdoms of Bulgaria, Servia, and Roumania. Her advances in Persia and towards the Afghan frontier could only be prosecuted provided she were prepared to meet Great Britain in war. But as these two lines of advance had been closed, there had opened out to her view a vista of tremendous possibilities in the Far East. There were China and Korea, two trees laden with ripe plums to be had for the picking. With ice-free harbours in her possession Russia would control the bulk of the commerce of China as well as the policy of that country. That would mean boundless wealth for Russia.

It was necessary merely to make sufficient preparation,—to establish a base of operations, to construct the essential railway line, and to mass a sufficient number of troops in the Far East to overcome the puerile opposition which was to be expected. The railway had been commenced both from Vladivostok and Russia; and by this time (1894) the eastern section had reached Khabarovsk, while the western section had been carried to the western shores of

Lake Baikal, and commencing again on the eastern bank had reached Strietensk. There was still a gap of about 1000 miles to be constructed ; but the work should be completed by 1905 or 1906.

Now, in 1895, the whole situation was suddenly changed. An opponent, worthy of consideration, had sprung into being—out of the Pacific Ocean ! A race of Asiatics which, a few years before, had been but semi-civilised, had displayed—wonder of wonders !—an altogether remarkable capacity for organisation, and for war, both by land and sea ; and, not content with that triumph, had ventured to seize the very plums on which the mighty Russia had fixed her gaze ! It was a monstrous thing, an impertinence ! Japan could not, for a moment, be permitted to hold her conquests. For the Japanese would now, without doubt, consider their interests in Korea to be paramount ; and would, equally without doubt, soon find a pretext for the annexation of the territory. And Port Arthur as a Japanese possession, a Japanese fortress, could only result in an increase of Japanese influence at Peking. But, more than that, Port Arthur lay on the flank of a Russian advance on Korea ; at a great distance, it is true, but close enough to seriously incommode Russian operations both diplomatic and military. Evidently Japan must be made to relinquish her conquests ; or—Russia must relinquish the main object for which she had worked and fought during the past two centuries. But how was it to be accomplished ? Asiatics though the Japanese were, they possessed

available forces, both naval and military, far superior to anything which Russia could bring to bear in a theatre so distant from her main resources. Force, applied by Russia alone, was therefore out of the question ; there remained diplomacy. The assistance of France could be counted upon, and, perhaps in this question, that of Germany.

Before the treaty between China and Japan had been ratified, in April, 1895, the three European nations, Russia, France, and Germany, "suggested" to Japan that she should relinquish her claims to territory on the mainland in consideration of a further money indemnity from China. The Russians also reinforced their fleet in the Pacific and mobilised their troops in the Amur province. Japan was constrained to submit ; and evacuated Port Arthur, receiving, roughly, £5,000,000 (from China) for her magnanimity. Russia and France assisted China to raise a loan of four hundred million francs with which to pay her indemnity.

Thus ended the first phase of the war between Russia and Japan—a war, so far, of notes and despatches ; but none the less, a war which must inevitably terminate in actual hostilities unless one or other of these two nations was prepared to forgo its ambitions. It was not so much ambition that was at stake so far as the Japanese were concerned ; it was the very existence of the nation. For with Korea and Port Arthur in the hands of Russia, room for expansion for the rapidly increasing population of Japan would be denied her. That could mean but

one thing—overcrowding, with its concomitant evils, the degeneration of the race, misery, and poverty, followed by the inevitable riots and revolution, foreign intervention, and the loss of independence. But, more than that, was there any reason to suppose that Russia would rest content with the possession of Korea and Port Arthur? With the possession of the great harbours of Korea would grow up a great mercantile marine, guarded by a powerful fleet. The over-sea commerce of the Far East must, of necessity, pass into the hands of Russia, and with it the wealth. *It is wealth in money as well as in men which enables* a nation to maintain armed forces with which to guard its existence and its welfare; and, with degenerate men and lack of wealth, Japan must, finally, succumb in the struggle to exist. True, Japan might gain room for expansion by the seizure of Chinese territory on which Russia had no designs, or she might seize colonies—the Philippine Islands from Spain. In either of these cases, however, she must become involved in war with European nations; and, even if successful, the Russian menace would not be averted. Korea was, moreover, the natural area for the expansion of the Japanese race. It was in close proximity to Japan, it was a peninsula which, once conquered, could be held without much difficulty by a nation of islanders, armed and vigorous both on sea and land. There was but one solution to this problem—to wrest by force from Russia that which was essential to the continued existence of the Japanese nation.

From this time forth the Japanese people, men, women, and even children, appear to have worked with this one great purpose in view.

In this manner were the two nations, the Russian and the Japanese, brought face to face in the Far East. The struggle which was to follow is especially interesting as being the first occasion on which two nations, organised as modern machines of war, were pitted against one another. The military and naval systems of each nation were based upon the principle of compulsory service, in either the army or the navy. *The chief difference between the two systems lay in the fact that, with the Japanese the military system was closely allied to the educational, military training forming, so to speak, the coping stone of the educational edifice. With the Russians, on the other hand, if all accounts be true, national education was practically non-existent. Numerous exemptions from service in the armed forces were also permitted; and men of influence could escape service. Hence, as was to be expected, large numbers of Russian soldiers were unable to read or write. If it be borne in mind that the German victory over the French in 1870 has been ascribed to the German schoolmaster, we see that the difference between the Russian and Japanese systems was a vital one.*



## CHAPTER II.

### THE NATIONAL STRATEGY AND PREPARATION FOR WAR OF THE COMBATANTS.

AT the end of the last chapter we discussed the new situation which had arisen in consequence of the Japanese victory over China, and of the intervention of European nations. But before we go further let us glance at the change in the international situation in Europe. We have seen that Germany and France joined hands with Russia in the Far East. Here were units of the two hostile camps in Europe making common cause. Was this not a fact of some significance? It is evident that Germany desired to re-establish friendly relations with Russia, and was prepared to assist that nation, provided she could do so without thereby incurring the displeasure of Austria.

By this act and others Germany had not only discarded her policy of isolating France, but was evidently seeking to re-establish friendly relations with that power. In 1894 two French officers who had been sentenced to six years' imprisonment for espionage were released by the German Emperor after having been imprisoned for a few months only,

a slight incident, perhaps, but significant. How can we account for this sudden change of attitude towards France?

It was but a few years prior to these events, in 1890, that the great German Chancellor, Prince Bismarck, had resigned, and there is some reason to suppose that his resignation was due partly to a change in policy, for in the same year a new Colonial Department, together with a Colonial Council, was formed in view of the expansion of German power in East Africa. Bismarck was, it is said, opposed to a Colonial policy.

In 1887 the Kiel Canal was commenced, and its completion was expected in 1895. In 1893 an attempt made by the German Government to increase the strength of the navy was defeated in the German Parliament.

In 1894 trouble arose between the Boers and the Uitlanders in Johannesburg; and, the friction becoming continually more serious, Great Britain commenced to intervene on behalf of the latter. In view of the German Emperor's telegram to President Kruger on the occasion of the Jameson Raid in January, 1896, and his reference to Germany as a "World Empire," we are, perhaps, justified in venturing the suggestion that the German nation was already, at this period, turning its attention to over-sea expansion. Such a policy was certain to bring her sooner or later into conflict with Great Britain; and, if such a conflict was to be expected, wise strategy would direct the policy of

isolation against Great Britain instead of against France.

Germany's action in support of Russia was also, it is probable, dictated by her desire to find for that nation full employment in the Far East, and so divert her attention from European affairs, even as she had sought to divert French attention to Africa. As for France, her action in the matter was evidently dictated by loyalty to her ally, as well as by hostility to Great Britain. For France had by no means forgotten that she had been, but a few years previously, supplanted in Egypt by Great Britain.

Great Britain, greatly concerned with the trend of events in South Africa, had little desire, apparently, to place herself in opposition to the three greatest powers of Europe. She accordingly held aloof. Thus we see a *rapprochement* between the Dual and Triple Alliances as regards the Far East; and Great Britain, far from holding the balance of power in her hands, was being pushed into a position of isolation, if not of enmity to Europe.

Towards the end of 1896 Russia obtained a concession from the Chinese granting permission to carry the Siberian Railway from Chita direct to Vladivostok through Manchuria and south of the River Amur. By this route through Chinese territory the length of the railway line between Lake Baikal and Vladivostok would be shortened by some 500 miles, and the period required for its completion proportionately decreased. The contract was nominally concluded between the Chinese Government and the Russo-Chinese Bank,

while the railway was to be constructed by the "Chinese Eastern Railway Company," both the bank and company being, in reality, Russian concerns. This Chinese concession practically meant the cession to Russia of a territory 800 miles in length by 400 miles in breadth. Russia obtained this concession as compensation for her assistance in the matter of the loan. It was evident to the nations of the world that China was practically helpless, and that the scramble for Chinese territory was about to commence. Germany, taking advantage of the murder of two of her missionaries, started the ball rolling. After prolonged negotiations she obtained a lease for ninety-nine years of Kiao-Chao Bay, a certain extent of territory on either side of the entrance to the bay, a zone of influence, and railway and mining rights. At the same time Great Britain sought to make of Talienwan a treaty port,<sup>1</sup> her object being, evidently, to stop the expansion of Russian power towards the Yellow Sea and Korea. Wei-hai-Wei was still in the hands of the Japanese. Hence, it was high time for Russia to move again if she still desired an ice-free port. In December, 1897, her Vladivostok fleet appeared at Port Arthur, receiving permission from the Chinese to winter in the harbour. By the following March

<sup>1</sup> A "treaty port" is a port in a semi-civilised country which is thrown open to foreign trade by foreign powers. These powers also obtain territorial rights over certain localities, and establish colonies therein. The subjects of these powers cannot be punished except with the consent of their consuls. Broadly speaking, a treaty port becomes a neutral zone in which many foreign powers possess rights and which cannot therefore be annexed by any one power without the consent of the other powers concerned.

Russia had obtained Port Arthur and Talienwan, on a lease for twenty-five years, which could be extended if necessary. She also obtained the right to fortify her new possessions. This concession was obtained as a set-off to that obtained by the Germans at Kiao-Chao. The fortification of Port Arthur was commenced in due course, as was the construction of the southern branch of the Chinese Eastern Railway, which was to connect that place with Harbin. France, similarly, obtained Kuang-chou-Wan from China on lease.

Great Britain, not to be behindhand, acquired a lease of the territory adjacent to Hong Kong for ninety-nine years, and the right to occupy Wei-hai-Wei, on its evacuation by the Japanese, for so long as the Russians remained in occupation of Port Arthur. On the conclusion of this convention the Japanese evacuated Wei-hai-Wei in favour of the British. Thus it became still more apparent that Great Britain was inclined to range herself alongside of the Japanese. Japan, in the meantime, though she was the power of all others most justified in obtaining Chinese territory, somewhat ostentatiously held aloof. A diplomatic contest, however, ensued between Russia and Japan for the exercise of supreme influence in Korea. In 1896 the Japanese suggested the partition of Korea, but the Russians refused.<sup>1</sup> The Japanese thereupon by degrees established commercial control throughout southern Korea; and the Russians were obliged to consider the advisability of interposing

<sup>1</sup> Russian official *History of the Russo-Japanese War* (French translation).

a barrier of some nature to the further extension of Japanese influence into Northern Korea and Manchuria.<sup>1</sup> A Russian merchant of Vladivostok consequently obtained a concession from the Korean Government to exploit the forests of Northern Korea along the left banks of the Yalu and Tumen Rivers.

In 1898 war broke out between Spain and the United States, one result being that the Philippine Islands fell under the sway of the latter. From this time forward that nation was interested in the Far Eastern situation—concerning itself especially with the opening of Chinese ports to trade. The United States, like Great Britain, were supporters of the policy of the “open door”—in its application, at least, to other, and especially moribund, empires. In view of the fact that Russia held an unenviable reputation for officialism, high tariffs, strict supervision and stringent regulations on all her frontiers, it was but natural that American sympathies should go out to Japan.

In 1899 and 1900 a rising, known as the Boxer Rebellion, occurred in northern China. It was directed against foreigners, and was the direct result of European aggression in China. It gradually attained large proportions; the Legations in Peking were besieged, and the rebellion spread to Manchuria. The Legations were relieved by contingents furnished by the European nations concerned, while the rebellion in Manchuria was crushed

<sup>1</sup> Russian official *History of the Russo-Japanese War*.

with but little difficulty by the Russians towards the end of 1900.

As a result of this rising, the Legation guards in Peking were strengthened, certain other places in China were garrisoned by European troops, while Russia effectively occupied Manchuria. Russia, indeed, sought to establish a protectorate over Manchuria; but, opposed by Japan, the United States, Great Britain, and Germany, was forced to give way. It is interesting to note that, in this instance, Germany stood against Russia.

The Russians were also engaged in the fortification of Port Arthur, in the construction of railway lines to connect that fortress with Harbin, and in the completion of her great line connecting Vladivostok with Harbin and Russia. An Imperial Chinese Railway under Chinese control, connecting Ying-Kou with Peking, was practically completed.

In the meantime the Russian General staff had given close consideration to the military situation in the Far East. The first definite plan of campaign had been drawn up in 1895, when the prospect arose that it might be necessary to expel the Japanese from Port Arthur by force. At that time, in view of the weakness of the Russian land forces in the Far East as compared with those of Japan, it was evident that, on land, the Russians must stand on the defensive, and content themselves with guarding their possessions around Vladivostok. On the sea, however, they, together with France and Germany, could bring overwhelming force to bear.

As we have seen, the Japanese gave way without fighting.

Year by year the plan of operations was revised by the Russian General Staff, and such modifications were introduced as were rendered necessary by the extension of the Russian power in the Far East.

The acquisition of Port Arthur and of Manchurian territory, and the construction of the Eastern Chinese railway, increased the number of points to be defended; but the available Russian land forces had also been considerably increased. It became necessary to garrison Port Arthur; and it was recognised that this fortress, which would certainly be attacked by the Japanese, would be isolated for a long period. The Russians still, however, apparently put their faith in the assistance of the French and German fleets, and on the fact that, if only for financial considerations, the Japanese would hardly venture to enter single-handed upon a struggle with so powerful a combination.

In 1898 General Kuropatkin had been appointed Minister of War in Russia. He points out that it is the duty of the Headquarter Staff to "work out all probabilities, and, regardless of existing international relations, to provide for war in every possible quarter." He accordingly reviewed the military situation of the Empire. In 1900 he recorded his opinion, and that of the General Staff, that, in the event of war single-handed with Japan, the latter nation would possess great numerical superiority, both by sea and land, at the commencement of the war.



The Japanese, he asserted, would be able to mobilise 400,000 men with 1100 guns, of which they could transport about one-half across the sea; and that they would have immediately available seven divisions, with a war strength of 126,000 rifles, 5000 sabres, and 494 guns for over-sea service. This force would be greatly superior to anything which the Russians could bring to bear in Manchuria if war broke out within the next few years. The Japanese might rest content with the occupation of Korea; but, on the other hand, they might also assume the offensive in Manchuria, or against Port Arthur, or Vladivostok. To meet these threats, he proposed to garrison Port Arthur and Vladivostok, and to concentrate the remainder of such forces as Russia possessed in Manchuria between Mukden, Liao-yang, and Hsiu-yen. These forces were to act as a screen—or, to use his own words, “an impenetrable veil, under cover of which the main forces can be concentrated.” This screen was to delay the Japanese advance, retiring, if necessary, as far back as Harbin. He considered that this screen should be brought up to a strength of 96 battalions, 57 squadrons, and 236 guns, roughly about 100,000 men. But, in view of the incomplete condition of the Siberian and Eastern Chinese Railways, it was estimated that the time required before such a force could be collected and maintained in Manchuria would be six to seven years.

General Kuropatkin therefore urged that the greatest circumspection should be exercised in deal-

ing with other nations, lest Russia should permit herself "to be drawn into war at a disadvantage, with an insufficient number of troops which could be only very slowly concentrated."<sup>1</sup>

He favoured the fortification of Port Arthur, and the construction of roads, but was strongly averse to a forward policy in the Far East lest it should stir up a conflict with Japan. "At present," he wrote, "we are in no way ready to take an active line in Korea, and must, at any cost, avoid stirring up a conflict with Japan on account of Korean affairs. We are certain to encounter Japan's strenuous opposition in our endeavour to obtain control of the Korean markets, even if it be only in the shape of political or mere trade competition, and if we cannot altogether avoid a conflict, we shall in all probability have to fight her in the beginning of the twentieth century."<sup>2</sup>

He was, furthermore, strongly in favour of devoting the energies of the Russian nation to its western frontiers.

Here we see the Minister of War, a soldier, who was primarily responsible for the Russian army, concerning himself with the National Policy or National Strategy, which is usually regarded as the exclusive province of the statesman. Was General Kuropatkin justified in his excursion into the

<sup>1</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, by General Kuropatkin, vol. i. p. 123; vol. ii. pp. 26 *et seq.* (Translation by Captain A. B. Lindsay).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 73.

realms of what is generally called "International Politics"?

National Policy is, in reality, the purpose which National Strategy has in view. The latter has two weapons at command with which to effect its object—diplomacy; and the armed forces. Perhaps the greatest distinction between the modern machine of war and the unorganised nation of obsolete type lies in the fact that with the former the national object, or policy, is clearly defined and laid down by the trained national leaders, together with the various steps, both diplomatic and military, which are necessary for the attainment of that object. The armed forces are, if necessary, increased, the money being found by hook or by crook, to enable them to execute their mission when diplomacy fails—as it usually must fail, sooner or later. The great thing is to ensure that diplomacy and the preparation of the armed forces should keep pace; and that in no circumstances should diplomacy be permitted to outstrip preparation—that is, to bring about a critical state of affairs before the armed forces are ready.

With the unorganised nation, with untrained leaders, on the other hand, the armed forces exist with some indefinite conception of defence, but with no clearly defined ideas of the rôle they may be called on to play. The national purpose or policy is, accordingly, altered at will to suit the size of the armed forces or the idiosyncrasies of the statesman of the moment. Or worse still, the national policy is retained so far as diplomacy is concerned, but irre-

spective of the capacity of the armed forces to execute it.<sup>1</sup>

The greatest of all dangers to be apprehended in connection with war is, perhaps, lest a conflict should be precipitated by diplomacy before the armed forces are prepared to meet and overcome those of the adversary; and it was evidently this fear which induced General Kuropatkin, in his capacity as administrator of the army, to intervene to check the too rapid progress of diplomacy. In 1898 and 1899 General Kuropatkin regarded unfavourably the situation of the Russians in the Far East. In 1900, however, during the suppression of the Boxer rebellion, the Russians found that they could concentrate 100,000 men in Manchuria; and this fact was responsible for the growth of an optimistic view of the situation. Ideas of an offensive movement into

<sup>1</sup> British national strategy, for instance, seeks solely to assure the welfare of the race. But the steps by which that welfare is to be assured have, apparently, never been clearly thought out. At one time the nation will pin its faith to maintaining the balance of power, which therefore becomes the policy or object of the nation. At another time it is social reform which holds the field to the exclusion of all else. The national policy swings, pendulum fashion, between these two. The balance of power requires powerful fighting forces, military as well as naval; social reform—from the point of view of social reformers—requires none at all, provided other nations will but leave us alone. The strength of the armed forces varies according to the swing of this pendulum. Fortunately the common sense of the nation tells it that other nations may not leave us alone, inasmuch as while we are fat and rich, some other nations are lean but strong. It therefore insists on a navy to guard itself against invasion and to assure its food supplies; and on an army of sufficient strength to police its empire. But it is evident that these forces will prove altogether insufficient when it becomes necessary to revert to the policy of the maintenance, or restoration, of the balance of power.

Korea in case of war with the Japanese gradually gained ground, though these ideas were stoutly combated by General Kuropatkin. The fact was disregarded that during the Boxer rebellion the Russians had been able to transport troops and munitions of war oversea, but that this power might well be denied them in the event of a duel with Japan.

In 1901 war against the Japanese combined with the Chinese seemed probable. The Russian plan still was to hold Vladivostok and Port Arthur with garrisons, and to concentrate the remainder of their forces in the area of Mukden, Liao-yang, and Hai-cheng. Reinforcements were to be brought up from Russia as rapidly as possible; and, ultimately, the Russians were to assume the offensive. It was calculated that in three months after the order to mobilise the Russians could place 28,000 men at Vladivostok, 15,000 at Port Arthur, 21,500 at important points in Manchuria or guarding the railway, with a central force of 26,500 at Mukden, Liao-yang, and Hai-cheng. Within seven months the Russians could bring up an additional 70,000 men. Harbin was to be made into a large supply depôt containing three months' supplies. The bulk of the fleet was to be concentrated at Port Arthur to check all attempts of the Japanese to land in the Gulfs of Korea or Pechili. Admiral Alexiev, who commanded in the Kuan-tung Peninsula, considered that the Japanese would not dare to attempt a landing except in Korea at a distance from the Russian fleet, which had been considerably reinforced.

It was calculated that the Japanese could land three divisions in Korea within three weeks, and three more divisions within another week; and that fifteen days later these could enter Manchuria. At the end of six months it was calculated that the Russians could oppose 145,000 men to 122,000 Japanese in the neighbourhood of the Eastern Chinese Railway. The possibility that the Japanese might land at Gensan or Possiet Bay and advance on Kirin was also considered.

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In 1902 the situation was suddenly altered to the grave disadvantage of Russia. On the outbreak of the war between Great Britain and the Boers in 1899, a wave of strong sympathy with the Boers, and antipathy to Great Britain, swept over Europe. Intervention was suggested by Germany; but in view of the overwhelming strength of the British navy at that time, and of the failure of Germany to obtain allies, the suggestion fell through. The attitude of European nations, however, and especially that of Germany, was by no means forgotten by the British people; and in January, 1902, when the result of the South African war was no longer in doubt, an alliance between Great Britain and Japan was promulgated.

As this alliance had far-reaching consequences we quote the terms of it from our own official history of this war.

“On the 30th January 1902, the Governments of Great Britain and Japan ‘actuated solely by a desire to maintain the *status quo* and general peace in the

extreme East, being moreover specially interested in maintaining the independence and territorial integrity of the Empire of China and the Empire of Korea, and in securing equal opportunities in those countries for the commerce and industry of all nations' signed an agreement which was to remain in force for five years. By it each Power contracted, in the event of either of them becoming involved in war with a third Power in defence of its interests in the extreme East, to maintain strict neutrality and use its efforts to prevent other Powers from joining in hostilities against its ally: but should any other Power or Powers join in hostilities, to come to the assistance of its ally and conduct the war in common."

Let us now consider the inner meaning of this agreement. France and Germany had, in 1895, as we have seen, supported Russia in obliging the Japanese to evacuate the mainland: they would, doubtless, be prepared to support Russia again in any action she might think fit to take in the Far East. This combination was still too powerful for Japan; for although the Russian forces actually in the Far East at that time were comparatively insignificant, and though the Siberian Railway had not been completed, yet France, Germany, and Russia combined could despatch a fleet to Far Eastern waters which would be far more than a match for the Japanese fleet. These nations had already, at the time of the Boxer rebellion, displayed capacity, limited it is true, for transporting troops to the Far East; and the moral effect of so powerful a com-

bination would assuredly induce the Chinese to join the coalition. Hence, though at the outset Japan might hope to prove victorious, to occupy Korea and to capture Port Arthur, yet it was practically certain that, in the long run, she would not only be forced to evacuate her conquests, but to make peace on disadvantageous, if not disastrous, terms.

By the alliance with Great Britain, however, the situation was entirely altered in favour of the Japanese. With the assistance of Great Britain, Japan would be able to raise the funds necessary for the prosecution of a great war. The power of the British navy at that period was sufficiently overwhelming to ensure that neither the French, Russians, nor Germans, nor the three combined, would be able to despatch a fleet from European waters to the Far East. In these circumstances the over-sea transport of troops to the Far East would be impracticable; and Russia would be obliged to trust entirely to her incomplete railway by means of which to reinforce her land forces in Manchuria. Hence, the British Alliance reduced the contest in the Far East to a duel between Japan and Russia, for which the latter was by no means fully prepared.

The alliance was, therefore, of tremendous advantage to Japan, and it will be seen that now was the auspicious moment at which Japan could attack and drive the Russians from Manchuria. Russia, knowing full well that without the assistance of France and Germany her forces in the Far East would be, at the outbreak of hostilities, too weak to



withstand those of Japan, evidently became nervous. General Kuropatkin, Minister of War, was immediately despatched to Japan to report on the situation ; and on the 16th March, 1902, within two months of the promulgation of the Anglo-Japanese agreement, a Franco-Russian agreement was published explaining that the principles expressed in the Anglo-Japanese agreement were fundamentally identical with those which actuated French and Russian policy. These two nations, however, reserved to themselves the right to take such action as might become necessary in case of aggressive action by a third power, or of the recurrence of disorders in China.

A few weeks later, on the 8th April, 1902, Russia, still evidently nervous, concluded a treaty with China by which she engaged to evacuate Manchuria within eighteen months, a certain portion of territory being handed back to China every six months, but provided only there was an absence of all disorder in Manchuria, and that other nations put no obstacle in the way. Thus the Russians left a loophole through which they could, if circumstances rendered it desirable, wriggle out of this engagement.

In concluding this treaty Russia evidently hoped to deprive Great Britain and Japan of all right of interference in Manchuria, and to make of her occupation of Manchuria a question between herself and the helpless China alone. But, in reality, it was a great triumph for Japanese diplomacy ; for if Russia faithfully fulfilled her engagements, not only must Port Arthur become of little value to her, but she

would be deprived of much of her power to influence, or encroach on, Korea. If, on the other hand, Russia failed to fulfil her engagements, Japan might, if she so desired, regard the continued Russian occupation of Manchuria as a menace to her interests, and therefore a pretext for war.

Whether Russia, in concluding the treaty, did or did not intend to fulfil her engagements, remains in some doubt. But the facts are as follows: In October, 1902, the evacuation of Manchuria was commenced, and the south-west portion of the Mukden province restored to China.

The evacuation of the second section of Manchuria, however, was not carried out; and in March, 1903, when the Chinese Minister made enquiries at St. Petersburg, though he was informed that the delay was but temporary, yet at the same time Russia put forward demands which would practically result in again giving her control over the whole of Manchuria. In the meantime, however, the Russian fleet in the Far East, numbering twenty-six ships of war, was being largely reinforced; and by the end of June, 1903, it had been increased by two battleships, six protected cruisers, and seven destroyers.

As an immediate result of the demands which Russia sought to impose on China, Great Britain, the United States, and Japan lodged protests; and, giving encouragement to China, induced that country, on the 29th April, 1903, to refuse the Russian demands. Thus we see Japan again openly entering the arena and claiming that she possessed interests

in Manchuria as well as in Korea. She now took the lead, making representations in St. Petersburg, raising the whole question of the Russian occupation of Manchuria and activity in Korea, and pointing out that the Russians stationed in Manchuria on the flank of Korea—in which country Japan held paramount interests, political, commercial, and industrial—would constitute a serious menace to the interests of Japan.

Direct negotiations ensued between the two nations, the features of which were that while Japan maintained her right to intervene in Manchurian and Chinese affairs, Russia denied that right, asserting that the question of Manchuria concerned herself and China alone, and, further, seeking to limit Japan's influence in Korea.

In consequence of the situation which had thus arisen, General Kuropatkin was again, in June, 1903, despatched to Port Arthur, to take part in a council which was convened "for the purpose of finding, if possible, some means of settling the Manchurian question without lowering the dignity of Russia."

The reasons for the sudden Russian change of front as regards the evacuation of Manchuria have been variously stated.

The Russian official history of the war asserts that rumours of an alliance between Japan, China, and Korea were responsible for the suspension of the evacuation, as it was evident that the moment the Russians evacuated the country the Japanese would step in. The desire to check Japanese expansion into northern Korea also led the Russians to utilise

the concession to cut timber on the Yalu and Tumen Rivers which had been obtained years before from the Korean Government. At the end of 1902 a similar concession had been obtained from the Chinese Government as regards the right banks of these two rivers. One M. Bezobrazoff, a former State Councillor, had already in 1901 formed a company to purchase these concessions lest they should fall into the hands of the British or Japanese. He argued that Russian penetration into Manchuria would be dangerous unless protected by an alliance with France and Germany, by *troupes de couverture* in Manchuria of sufficient strength to withstand the Japanese until reinforcements could be brought up, and the occupation of "strategic positions," one of which, he considered, was the line of the Yalu and Tumen Rivers. If these measures were adopted, he pointed out, Manchuria, though not formally annexed by Russia, would nevertheless be "embraced," and Russian influence paramount in the country.<sup>1</sup>

M. Bezobrazoff's ideas appear to have received the whole-hearted support, if not of the Russian Government, yet of many important people in St. Petersburg. It was also considered that if war did break out—and it was evident that the Japanese preparations were far advanced—the Mukden province would be essential to the Russians as a source of supply; that it would, moreover, be preferable to hold the comparatively short line from Port Arthur by the Yalu to

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to compare M. Bezobrazoff's strategical conceptions with those of the British "ring fence" theory in connection with the Boer Republics before the war of 1899, together with the results.

Vladivostok rather than the extended line from Port Arthur to Harbin and thence to Vladivostok ; finally, that, if the Russians evacuated Manchuria, Port Arthur would be further isolated, further from support, and more than ever vulnerable to Japanese attack.

The foregoing is one explanation. A different complexion is, however, put upon the matter in General Kuropatkin's book, *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, and by some documents which were captured by the Japanese in the archives of Port Arthur and published in 1905 by the Japanese.<sup>1</sup>

On General Kuropatkin's return from Japan he had reported that unless Russia altered her policy in the Far East, war with Japan was inevitable. He was, evidently, considerably impressed by what he had seen and heard in Japan ; and he urged the evacuation, not only of Manchuria, but of Port Arthur.

It appears probable that his advice was about to be accepted when M. Bezobrazoff appeared on the scene. The latter appears to have successfully enlisted the sympathies of many great personages in Russia with his undertaking, and it would even seem that these were interested financially in the venture. He now, apparently, succeeded in inducing the Russian Government not only to reconsider its decision to evacuate Manchuria, but to re-establish its ascendancy throughout that province and to commence activity on the Yalu, the frontier of Korea.

That activity took the form of the occupation by Russian troops of Yungampo at the mouth of the

<sup>1</sup> See also *The Russo-Japanese Conflict*, by Asakawa.

Yalu River in April, 1903. It has been stated, indeed, that this Russian merchant had established complete ascendancy in St. Petersburg, and that from this time forward he practically controlled Russian national strategy in respect of the Far East. Money which should have been devoted to the fortifications of Port Arthur and to the completion of the railway lines was now diverted to the construction and equipment of a great commercial port at Dalny, which afterwards proved to be of extraordinary value to the Japanese in their military operations.

The timber was to be brought from the Yalu to Dalny, where a great sawmill was to be erected. Many millions were consequently expended in constructing docks and quays at Dalny, while "Port Arthur was without a dock, and repairs could only be executed slowly."<sup>1</sup>

Worse than that, Dalny was not fortified, and might in conceivable circumstances constitute an admirable base for hostile operations against Port Arthur.

A great town, with fine public buildings, was being built at Dalny, at enormous cost; and yet the supplementary estimates for five years for the army, which included preparations for war in the Far East, and which were presented in 1903, had been cut down from £56,500,000 to £16,000,000.<sup>2</sup>

Admiral Alexiev, in his capacity as Governor-General of the Liao-tung Peninsula, was apparently President

<sup>1</sup> It has been stated that Russia spent 20,000,000 roubles, or about £3,500,000, on Dalny before the commencement of hostilities.

<sup>2</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War.*

of the Council at Port Arthur; State Councillor Bezobrazoff, the head of the timber company, was also present.

The Czar had expressed a wish that commercial enterprise in the Far East should not be permitted to lead to war. The Council therefore decided to deprive the timber company of its "politico-military aspect," and thereby to deprive Japan of a possible excuse for war, by obliging to withdraw from it all officers of the regular army or persons employed in the service of the empire. Lt.-Colonel Madritoff, of the General Staff, who was manager of the company, was therefore called upon either to resign his commission or his commercial appointment. But the interesting point is that, according to the Japanese version, the Czar, many Grand Dukes, the Minister of the Interior, and even Admiral Alexiev, were all, apparently, members of the company, or concerned financially in its welfare. It is asserted, moreover, that at this period State Councillor Bezobrazoff had become the most powerful man in the Russian Empire, merely, it would seem, through his power of holding out hopes of financial advantages to be obtained by the operations of his timber company. In April, 1903, he had been to Russia, where he had, apparently, interviewed the Czar. It is even said that he, in conjunction with the Minister of the Interior, brought about the dismissal of M. de Witte, the Finance Minister, who, together with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and General Kuropatkin, the Minister of War, was opposed to his commercial

operations on the Yalu. He also, it is believed, obtained the appointment of Admiral Alexiev as Viceroy in the Far East as a reward for the support afforded by the latter to the timber company.

Now, the unfortunate General Kuropatkin was in entire ignorance of this intrigue, firmly believing that all, and especially Admiral Alexiev, were assisting him loyally in his endeavours to limit the energies of the timber company, and so avert war.

The whole thing is an extraordinary story: not only were funds urgently required for military and naval preparations being diverted to these commercial undertakings, but the movement of troops was actually dictated by these same commercial interests. Hence, it was merely the interests of this company which caused the suspension of the evacuation of Ying-Kou and, later on, of Mukden; while in April, 1903, and again in November it was responsible for the movement of troops to the valley of the Yalu and to Feng-huang-Cheng.

From this time forward the constant representations of General Kuropatkin, who returned to Russia in July, and who urged the Russian Government to discontinue its adventures in the Far East and to devote attention to the military situation on the western frontiers of the Russian Empire, went entirely disregarded.

According to the Russian official history, General Kuropatkin was entirely satisfied with the progress made in preparation for war in the Far East, provided the Russians were content to hold Port



Arthur, Vladivostok, and Northern Manchuria, and avoid the creation of trouble by the occupation of Southern Manchuria and encroachment towards the Yalu. He desired above all that the Russians should devote their attention to the military situation on their western frontiers. M. Bezobrazoff, on the other hand, thought only of the Far East. He desired to press forward towards the Yalu, and urged the immediate increase of the Russian forces in Manchuria by 50,000 men. General Kuropatkin and M. Bezobrazoff, indeed, appear to have been the champions of two different policies. As a result each champion gained a part of his object; M. Bezobrazoff succeeded in making Russian diplomacy take an aggressive form, in bringing about a Russian advance towards Korea and the suspension of the evacuation of Manchuria; while General Kuropatkin succeeded in preventing the increase, desired by M. Bezobrazoff, of the Russian forces in Manchuria. The outcome was to prove disastrous.

In March, 1903, in accordance with the representations of M. Bezobrazoff, and in order to "establish vigilant control over the cutting of trees" on the Korean frontier, a detachment of frontier guards (reservists of the Siberian Chasseurs) was despatched to the Yalu. These commenced to establish dépôts, one being at Yongampo at the mouth of the Yalu. In April, 1903, the evacuation of Manchuria was suspended until the Russians could obtain guarantees that other nations would not be permitted to step in, that the railway would not again be destroyed (as had

happened in the Boxer rebellion), and that in case of fresh disorders facilities would be granted for the advance of Russian troops to re-establish order.

Admiral Alexiev was appointed Viceroy of the Far East on August 13th, 1903, with supreme control over the forces military as well as naval. He was responsible solely to a "Special Committee of Far Eastern Affairs,"<sup>1</sup> which was presided over by the Czar. He was immediately called on by the Ministry of War to appreciate the military situation and to formulate plans for a possible war with the Japanese.

Certain modifications now appeared in the original plans. The Russian forces in the Far East, both naval and military, had been largely increased, while great progress had been made with the railways. Certain Chinese forces, which, it was believed, were being trained by Japanese, had been collecting on the western borders of Manchuria. These consisted of 15,000 to 20,000 men under one General Ma, with another 50,000 behind them. It was necessary to guard against these; and it was also possible that the Japanese might land at Ying-Kou or further west and advance under cover of these Chinese troops on Hsin-min-tun. This latter contingency was, however, considered unlikely on account of the Russian fleet at Port Arthur; and it was still considered practically certain that the Japanese would, in the first instance, effectively occupy Korea and, thereafter, take Port Arthur as their main objective. Port Arthur was therefore to be garrisoned by some 12,000 men,

<sup>1</sup> Of which M. Bezobrazoff was a member.

Vladivostok by 7000 ; detachments were to be posted at important points in Manchuria, both to guard the railway and to watch the Chinese ; an "advanced guard" of 19,000 men with eighty-six guns was to be pushed forward to the Yalu to delay the Japanese advance into Manchuria to the utmost ; Ying-Kou was to be seized, and the remainder of the Russian field forces was to be concentrated in a central position in the area Mukden, Liao-yang, Hai-cheng.

It was claimed that the detachment on the Yalu would utilise that river as an obstacle to delay the Japanese advance and that when forced to retreat it would hold the Fen-shui-ling mountains, and from thence would, in conjunction with the central force, threaten the line of communications of the Japanese in their advance from Korea on Port Arthur.

This distribution was apparently not altogether to Kuropatkin's liking, for he pointed out in a memorandum to the Czar that, though the Russian forces had been largely increased, yet "Japan had not been idle, but had been unceasingly increasing her naval and military forces." He drew attention to the dangerous situation of a detachment on the Yalu, which would probably be attacked by superior forces, especially if the Russians failed to gain command of the sea. He also pointed out that, if Japan employed all her available forces, the Russians could not hope to hold Southern Manchuria ; and that they must expect Port Arthur to be isolated for a considerable period ; but that, nevertheless, they must avoid being beaten in detail, and must retire towards

Harbin until reinforcements should enable them to assume the offensive once and for all. He also drew attention to the weakness of the Port Arthur garrison.<sup>1</sup> He evidently apprehended danger both to Port Arthur and to this "advanced guard" which was to be pushed forward to the Yalu ; and he feared that the available Japanese strength had been increased, though the official reports still placed it at 126,000 rifles, 5000 sabres, and 494 guns. As a matter of fact—though this was a fact of which Kuropatkin was unaware—two Russian officers, a soldier and a sailor, had reported the existence of certain "reserve units" which would vastly increase the Japanese war strength. These reports, however, which were not corroborated by other reports, had been pigeon-holed. Nevertheless, they were quite true. But it is commonly the case that reports which are uncomfortable reading, which show the situation in a new and serious light, are pigeon-holed. It is so much more pleasant to look always at the situation through rose-coloured spectacles—that is to say, until the crisis occurs.

But the strength of the Japanese land forces appears to have been, in the view of all except General Kuropatkin, of somewhat minor importance. For Admiral Alexiev, the Viceroy, considered, in 1903, that the Russian fleet was "so strong that any possibility of its defeat by the Japanese was inadmissible." General Kuropatkin also quotes the opinion expressed by Admiral Alexiev's Chief of

<sup>1</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. ii. pp. 26 et seq.

the Naval Staff, Admiral Vitgeft, in answer to an enquiry by the Ministry of War: "According to the present relative strengths of the two fleets, the possibility of ours being defeated is a contingency that need not be considered, and until it has been destroyed it is inconceivable that the Japanese can land at Niuchuang or any other spot on the Gulf of Korea."<sup>1</sup> This opinion was endorsed by the Viceroy.

Here we see Russian sailors practically giving expression to a theory which at that time possessed the naval world, namely, that the mere existence of a "fleet in being" was sufficient to render the transport of hostile troops over sea within the radius of action of that fleet too dangerous an operation to be adventured. If the Russian fleet could not be defeated, it could obviously not be destroyed; and if it could not be destroyed, it must be a "fleet in being"; and if it were a fleet in being, Japanese troops could not be transported over sea to any point within the Bay of Korea, that is, north of a line between Chemulpo and Wei-hai-Wei. That would mean that, if the Japanese sought to land troops on the mainland and attack the Russian army, their landing-places would be limited to the eastern and southern shores of Korea and to the western shore as far north only as Chemulpo. That would, in its turn, mean that before the Japanese troops

<sup>1</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. ii. p. 206. See also *Russian Official History*, vol. i. pp. 303-304. Ying-Kou is the seaport; New-chuang is a short distance inland.

could strike at the Russian troops on the Yalu they must traverse the greater part of the length, or breadth, of Korea, a distance of about 200 miles over a mountainous, sparsely populated country, with few supplies, and practically roadless. The only road which, according to our ideas, might be called by courtesy a road, was the one which runs from Chemulpo by Seoul to Antung, and this was—as the Russians certainly well knew—infamous, a mere track, thirty to forty feet wide certainly, but unmetalled, barely suitable for wheeled vehicles at any time, and wholly unfitted for the advance of a large army. Before, then, the Japanese could hurt the Russians on the Yalu a considerable period must elapse, and within that time the Russian force on the Yalu would be increased to such a strength as might enable it to hold its own. But in order to attack Port Arthur the Japanese must not only traverse Korea, must not only defeat the Russian force posted on the Yalu, but must also traverse Southern Manchuria from Antung to the Liao-tung Peninsula, an additional distance of 170 miles. Many months must elapse before so great a feat could be accomplished; for in addition to the army itself, every particle of food, ammunition, clothing—all the vast requirements of an army in the field—must be brought up this single, almost impassable road from Chemulpo by Antung and along the coast, or from Gensan over the mountains of Korea. But at certain times of the year, in the rains, and again while the snow was melting, the roads of Southern

Manchuria and Northern Korea became altogether impassable. Consequently, the mere difficulties opposed by nature would render the idea of a Japanese attack on Port Arthur an absurdity; but when the Russian army was also taken into consideration, the idea became ridiculous in the extreme. For by the time the Japanese, having traversed Korea and Southern Manchuria, were approaching the railway line, the Russian army would be reinforced to such a strength as would enable it to assume the offensive, and would, moreover, be strongly posted behind the screen of the Fen-shui-ling mountains threatening the right flank and line of communications of the unfortunate Japanese army, which, if beaten, must be driven into the sea.

Hence, if the Russian fleet were indeed invincible, there was little to be feared from the Japanese army. The utmost they could hope to accomplish was the temporary annexation of Korea, and that only provided they could bring sufficient forces to the Yalu to defeat the forces which the Russians could mass on that river. The ultimate expulsion of the Japanese from Korea would be a problem for the future; but, in the meantime, the Russians could firmly consolidate their position on the Yalu, occupying and fortifying the mouth of that river.

If, on the other hand, the Russian assumption as to the invincibility of the fleet proved to be false, then there was trouble in store for the Russians. For in that case Port Arthur, weakly garrisoned, might be captured by a *coup de main* or by a siege.

Or the Japanese might land at Ying-Kou, and so intercept the communications of all Russian troops south of that place. Such an operation, if executed in force, would oblige Russian troops on the Yalu to withdraw to Liao-yang. The main force of the Russians, however, posted about Hai-cheng would have something to say to a Japanese landing at Ying-Kou.

Or the Japanese might strike at the detachment on the Yalu. If they could transport troops and supplies over-sea with impunity to any point on the western coast of Korea, their troops would advance with far greater rapidity through Korea. The Japanese might also land a force at Ta-Ku-Shan to co-operate with their forces in Korea. Hence, time might not be granted in which to reinforce the Yalu detachment to a strength sufficient to cope with the forces which the Japanese might be able to bring against it; and, in that case, this detachment might easily find itself in a serious predicament.

A detachment pushed far in advance at the commencement of a war is always a fruitful cause of ultimate defeat. It is a main object of generalship to induce the separation of the hostile forces and overwhelm each portion in turn, and equally to avoid being beaten piecemeal. Yet, in the history of war, we commonly find a detachment pushed forward, under one pretence or another, only to be destroyed or roughly handled.

A common pretext is that it is necessary to gain time for the mobilisation or concentration of the



main forces. The weaker or the unready force will always seek to gain time, even as the stronger or the more ready will always seek to deny time to its weaker adversary. The weaker force can hope to gain time either by pushing forward a detachment to delay the enemy, or by shifting its zone of concentration to a greater distance from the enemy. The latter course, no matter what difficulties it entails, is usually the wiser; the former is the one usually adopted. For this question is usually bound up with problems of national strategy and politics. It is argued that the evacuation of territory will exercise an unfortunate influence on the non-combatant population, or on the attitude of neutrals or of subordinate races, or may jeopardise the authority or security of the government; and it is therefore considered essential to push forward a force to hold the territory in question. It is forgotten that the defeat of a detachment will exercise a far more disastrous influence than the mere evacuation of territory which, if the main forces prove victorious, will be merely temporary. We need only instance the wars of 1805, 1806, 1815, 1866, 1870, and 1899 to show that one most fatal course which can be adopted is to push forward an isolated detachment to withstand the onslaught of the whole force of the enemy; and yet we see the same thing done in 1904. And the same thing will, to a certainty, be done in a future war by an unready nation, by one which has not made a sufficiently close study of strategy, or by one whose admirals

and generals are dominated by politicians, public opinion, or commercial interests.

The point is that the serious defeat or destruction of a detachment at the very outset of a war is extremely demoralising to the army of which it forms a part. Is the Chief ignorant, or has he been outwitted; is he equal to the Commander-in-Chief of the enemy? This is the doubt which is engendered in the minds of officers and men; and there is no more serious cause of demoralisation than doubt as to the capacity of the Chief. But, more than that, at the outset of a war troops are always inclined to be over-confident; and if the enemy draws first blood, that over-confidence is rudely shattered; and men begin to ask themselves if there is any justification for their optimism. At the commencement of hostilities, again, troops, however carefully trained, seldom possess the ability to delay largely superior hostile forces without permitting themselves to become seriously involved. The difficult art of "fighting while retreating" can only be learned in the field; it is the pre-eminent accomplishment of veteran troops. Moltke was careful to warn his subordinate commanders before the commencement of the Franco-German war to avoid risking the destruction of detachments.

It will be seen, then, that there were, in certain eventualities, very considerable risks in posting this detachment on the Yalu. What were the advantages which the Russians hoped to gain by the presence of troops on the Korean frontier? All war is risky;

and he who will not accept risk will never win battles. But there is a time for all things; there is a time to accept risk; there is a time to avoid it. The greatest and boldest leaders have also always been the most cautious. The question which should always decide whether a certain risk is to be accepted is this—do the advantages to be gained compensate for the risks to be run? What, then, were the advantages in this case?

A Russian force on the Yalu was required if the commercial resources of the district were to be exploited. Hence, there were financial advantages—to the timber company, that is—to be expected from the presence of the detachment on the Yalu, provided the Russian fleet definitely won control of the Gulf of Korea. But if the Japanese won that control, or if the result were left in doubt, commercial traffic must obviously cease. The right to exploit the resources on the Yalu was one of the prizes to be fought for.

A Russian force on the Yalu would enable political pressure to be brought to bear on the Emperor and Government of Korea—a matter of no small importance. But that power would be valueless if the Japanese occupied Seoul, the capital, which, without doubt, the Japanese would do. A Russian force in Seoul would in this respect be more valuable than one on the Yalu; but such an idea was out of the question, for it would assuredly be attacked and overwhelmed by the Japanese. Hence the political or diplomatic advantages were practically valueless.

The right to bring pressure to bear at Seoul was also one of the points which must be fought for.

From a purely military standpoint, a Russian force on the Yalu would be of advantage in that it would obtain information of the progress of events, and of the Japanese, in Korea. But a few spies could obtain this information equally well, or perhaps better. Spies, however, could not prevent the intrusion of Japanese cavalry patrols into Manchuria. Hence, a body of cavalry, combined with a good intelligence service, would be best suited to meet the requirements. These could obtain information, watch the coast-line, and stop Japanese patrols. If attacked, their mobility would enable them to escape with certainty, in view of the fact that the Japanese cavalry were notoriously very weak, ill-mounted, and, it was believed, inefficient. This course was recommended by General Kuropatkin and the Russian Ministry of War in St. Petersburg.

But a force of cavalry alone would not enable the Russians to "gain time" in which to effect their concentration in the area Mukden, Liao-yang, Hai-cheng. Hence, if it were really necessary to gain time, it became necessary to push a force of all arms to the Yalu. Was it not possible, however, to effect the Russian concentration further to the north, between Mukden and Liao-yang? It would then become unnecessary to post a detachment on the Yalu. The only reason for selecting the zone of concentration so far to the south as Liao-yang, Hai-cheng, was that the army could the more easily carry

assistance to Port Arthur, if that place were attacked. But in view of the "invincibility" of the Russian fleet, Port Arthur could not, in the opinion of the Viceroy, be seriously attacked before the Russian army was prepared to assume the offensive. In any case, the wiser course would be to strengthen the garrison and the defences of Port Arthur, so as to enable the fortress to hold out for the required length of time.

Thus the advantages to be gained by posting a force of all arms on the Yalu would outweigh the risks to be run, so long as the struggle at sea was in doubt, or if the Russians definitely won control of the sea. But if the Japanese won control of the sea, or if the theory of the efficacy of a fleet in being proved to be false, then the risks would far outweigh the advantages to be gained; and, in that case, it would be essential to withdraw the infantry, at least, to a safer position. We are not astonished, therefore, to find that General Kuropatkin protested against this detachment, and drew attention to the necessity of avoiding the risk of defeat piecemeal.

The whole problem, it will be seen, turned largely on the question of the "invincibility" of the Russian fleet; and the question we now naturally ask ourselves is, What justification existed for that assumption of invincibility?

It is a curious fact that, from time immemorial, one of the chief causes of the defeat of an armed force is vanity—over-confidence, self-sufficiency, an unreasoning conviction of invincibility. Such a conviction

was a chief cause of the defeat of the Israelites by the men of Ai in the time of Joshua, as of the defeat of the Austrians in 1866 and of the French in 1870. It is, especially, a remarkable feature of naval warfare. The Athenians, Carthaginians, Venetians, Spaniards—all, in turn, called themselves "Mistress of the Seas," and suffered for their childish optimism. So pronounced a feature of war is it, that one is apt to exclaim, "invincibility" is the precursor of defeat! For the point is, that when a conviction of invincibility exists there is, evidently, no need to work and prepare for victory. This foolish conviction, moreover, is almost invariably based on ignorance of the true factors which win success in war; its exponents look solely to the material and disregard the moral.

The Russians possessed seven battleships, four armoured cruisers, seven protected cruisers, twenty-five destroyers, fourteen 1st class torpedo boats, and ten gunboats. The Japanese possessed only six battleships, eight armoured cruisers, twenty-seven protected cruisers, nineteen destroyers, and forty-nine 1st class and twenty-nine 2nd class torpedo boats.

The Russians compared the tonnage and number of battleships, the size and number of guns, the weight of metal which could be discharged—and so they arrived at a conclusion as to the respective values of the two fleets. They apparently neglected to even consider that their battleships and armoured cruisers "varied in speed, armament, protection, and tactical qualities." As a matter of fact, the Russians

possessed eleven ships fit to lie in line of battle, while the Japanese possessed fourteen. The speed of the Russian battle-fleet was but 16·3 knots, while that of the Japanese was 18·3. The Russians possessed forty-two guns of over six inches calibre, while the Japanese possessed fifty-five; the Russians possessed 138 six-inch guns, while the Japanese possessed 184. The possibility of surprise, also, the value of good leadership, the capacity of the staff, the fact that the Russian fleet was divided into two, or rather three portions, passed unnoticed. And yet, at this very time the Russian fleet required three days in which to enter or leave the harbour of Port Arthur; while the harbour of Vladivostok, in which were four of the most powerful Russian cruisers, could only be kept open between the months of December and March by an ice-breaker. In such circumstances what possibility was there of effecting surprise, or of escaping a blow if unfortunately the fleet should happen to be unexpectedly attacked in the roadstead outside Port Arthur? Mobility, which depends on perfect efficiency, is, surely, the very foundation of success in warfare on the sea as it is in warfare on land. It was as though an army, able to march only fifteen to twenty miles a day, believed in its capacity to stand up to equally good troops able to march thirty-five to forty miles a day.

So also was the training of the Russian sailors, in comparison with that of the Japanese, disregarded. The fact that the Russian sailors served for a longer

period than the Japanese was alone considered; it was forgotten that, for some time preceding the outbreak of hostilities, a portion of the fleet had been constituted as the "armed reserve of the Pacific," which really meant that certain vessels went to sea for only twenty days in the year, and became "floating barracks" for the remainder of the year.

It was forgotten that the spirit of emulation, of initiative, of devotion to duty, even of patriotism, had, if we are to credit the writer of "Rasplata,"<sup>1</sup> been deliberately stamped out in the Russian navy for reasons of economy.

In this connection let us quote Commander Seme-noff. "If a Captain loves his ship truly, he must not neglect to attend to the smallest defect in her. He must report it, and see that it is made good. In time a small defect may become the cause of a very big one. But if a Captain at Port Arthur did his duty in that manner, he was an 'inconvenient subordinate.' The Viceroy desired, as long as he reigned, to see no other reports than those in which it was stated that 'everything was in the best condition.' Then he was able to report most respectfully that 'the fleet confided to his care was completely prepared for war, and would valorously repel every attack of the enemy.'"

Now, let us glance at the consequence of such an attitude in the supreme authority. The worst

<sup>1</sup>"Rasplata" (The Reckoning), by Commander Vladimir Semenoff, Imperial Russian Navy. Published in the *R.U.S.I. Journal* for 1909-10.



men—time-servers, those who can be trusted to gloss over defects, to swear that black is white, to hold, express, and teach any opinions, however foolish, which they may be required to hold, express, or teach—are the men who “get on.” A few years of such a rule is sufficient to render an armed force worthless.

The bluejackets and the subordinate officers, according to Commander Semenoff, were excellent, except that there evidently existed a general distrust in the patriotism and sense of duty of the superior officers. What else could be expected when—again, according to Commander Semenoff—those superiors considered but one thing—their own interest. Of what value is patriotism and devotion to duty in the subordinate ranks if the leaders are lacking in these qualities?

But this was not all. The Russians had but two naval bases, Vladivostok and Port Arthur. At the former there was but one dock capable of taking a battleship; at the latter the one dock was not large enough for battleships. The extensive improvements which had been projected at Port Arthur, and for which money had been allotted, had not been executed.

The Japanese, on the other hand, possessed six fortified naval bases—Hakodate, Miyazu, Hiroshima, Maisuru, Shimonoseki, and Nagasaki—besides three bases for torpedo craft and several fortified harbours. In these bases were six to seven docks. It is evident, therefore, that in the matter of repairs to ships of war the Japanese held an enormous advantage over the Russians.

The Russians also laboured under another equally serious disadvantage in that three of the Japanese naval bases were situated close to the Korean Straits and midway between the Russian bases; and, as the Russian fleet was already divided into two main portions, the Japanese held the "interior lines," and could concentrate the whole of their naval force at will against either portion of the Russian fleet. It is true that Vladivostok and Port Arthur were in telegraphic communication, and that the separated portions of the Russian fleet could therefore be directed in a combined offensive movement against the Japanese. But, in view of the Russian desire to gain time and defer hostilities, an offensive was, at this period, hardly to be thought of. In any attempt to concentrate, moreover, one portion of the Russian fleet must pass through the Korean Straits. In the centre of those straits lay the Island of Tsushima, narrowing the passage to some thirty miles. On Tsushima was a fortified torpedo base, while opposite to the island was situated the naval base of Sasebo, where lay the Japanese fleet.<sup>1</sup> The passage between Tsushima and Korea was some thirty-five miles in breadth. The harbours of Masampo and Fusan in Korea were immediately opposite the island; and as these ports were practically in the hands of the Japanese, they would afford a lurking place for torpedo craft. These two passages could, moreover, be blocked to some

<sup>1</sup>The exact whereabouts of the Japanese fleet was, most probably, unknown to the Russians, and that ignorance would increase the difficulties of striking a sudden and unexpected blow.

extent by the Japanese at short notice by mine-fields.

Thus, though it was by no means impossible for the Russians to pass through the straits, yet it was to be expected that if they attempted to do so they would certainly be attacked at a disadvantage by the Japanese. An attempt to concentrate the Russian fleet would precipitate the conflict, which would be all against the Russian interest. Even if successful, the Russians could hardly hope to accomplish it without severe losses.

It appears, however, that the Russians purposely left four powerful cruisers at Vladivostok, with the idea that this detachment would threaten the Japanese over-sea communications to Korea, and thereby oblige them to detach a force more powerful than the Russian detachment to cover those communications. By that means the Japanese force operating in the Yellow Sea would be weakened and the chances of victory increased for the Port Arthur fleet. On these grounds the division of the Russian fleet into two main portions has been held to be justified. But there are certain essentials, if the operations of a detachment against the hostile lines of communication are to prove successful, which have apparently been overlooked. The detachment must know when to come forward and when to retreat into safety; it must execute a mere threat or a serious enterprise, according to circumstances, just in the nick of time so as to draw off superior hostile forces at the very moment when its main body is about to strike.

Such knowledge requires either a remarkable power of divination in the leader of the detachment or in the Commander-in-Chief, or an admirable intelligence system. Failing these, it is necessary to possess the power to reinforce the detachment from the main body, or *vice versa*, without the knowledge of the enemy; and so keep him in constant ignorance of the point from which the chief danger is to be expected. Failing any of these, such a detachment becomes a source of danger, and merely grants the enemy the advantage of the interior lines. We shall see, later on, to what extent this Russian detachment at Vladivostok assisted the operations of the Port Arthur fleet.

There was but one great advantage which the Russians held over the Japanese. The latter, though they possessed large numbers of trained reserve seamen, were unable to construct their own armoured vessels; and, up to this time, had been obliged to purchase their battleships and cruisers from foreign nations. The Russians, on the other hand, could not only construct armoured vessels in Europe, but possessed, what was at that time believed to be, a powerful fleet in European waters.<sup>1</sup> This advantage, however, would only apply in the case of a long drawn-out struggle for sea supremacy. With hostilities in progress the Japanese would not be able to purchase ships of war; but the Russian European

<sup>1</sup> Consisting of :—

4 First Class Battleships

6 Second Class Cruisers.

7 Second Class Battleships.

5 Third Class Cruisers.

3 Coast Defence Battleships.

fleet would, similarly, not be able to coal in the territorial waters of neutrals. As the Russians had no coaling stations of their own the voyage of their European fleet to the Far East, even if it were possible, would require many months.

It will be seen that there was but little justification for the assumption of "invincibility" as regards the Russian fleet in the Far East. That assumption had been based, not on a study of the comparative values of the Russian and Japanese fleets as fighting forces, but primarily on the fact that the Japanese were Asiatics while the Russians were Europeans, and that the Russian fleet possessed seven battleships, while the Japanese possessed but six.

An interesting feature is that, as in Great Britain at the present day, nobody appears to have ventured to question the wisdom of the opinion expressed by Russian naval authorities. The probable course of events which would occur if the Russian fleet were decisively defeated was not even considered; and everybody, with the possible exception of General Kuropatkin, slept peacefully in their beds in perfect confidence as to the ultimate result of war with Japan.

The Russian naval plan of campaign, which had been drawn up in April, 1901, was: the Port Arthur fleet was to gain command of the Gulf of Pechili and of the Yellow Sea; while the Vladivostok cruiser detachment, displaying the utmost energy, was to act against the Japanese communications in the Sea of Japan, to destroy Japanese sea-borne commerce, and

to execute raids against the Japanese coast-line and undefended harbours.

In spite of the optimism of Russian sailors General Kuropatkin's representations had a temporary effect, and it was decided to strengthen the Port Arthur garrison by the addition of the 3rd Siberian Corps. This would raise the force available for the defence of the fortress and of the peninsula on which it is situated from twelve battalions to thirty-six. The reason for this increase was the existence of Dalny, which place it was necessary to defend, "a magnificently equipped port, connected by railway to the fortress, and a most convenient base for operations against it."<sup>1</sup> General Kuropatkin evidently discredited this reputed invincibility of the Russian fleet, or, perhaps, he was such a heretic as to disbelieve in the efficacy of a "fleet in being."

It was at the end of July, 1903, that Japan entered into direct negotiation with St. Petersburg. Her requests, being characterised by extreme moderation, were, apparently, agreed to by the Russian Foreign Office, and it appeared probable that the problems in connection with both Manchuria and Korea would be amicably settled. But, as we have seen, on August 13th, 1903, Admiral Alexiev was suddenly appointed Viceroy of the Far East, with supreme control of the Civil Administration, with command of the forces, both naval and military, and with the management of diplomatic relations with the neighbouring states. He was rendered independent of Russian Ministers in

<sup>1</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. ii. p. 207.

St. Petersburg, and was responsible only to a special committee presided over by the Czar himself.

Russia now required that negotiations should be conducted in Tokio instead of at St. Petersburg. Hereupon a discussion ensued, which lasted for two weeks, Japan finally giving way. A further delay of eight weeks ensued before an answer was received by Japan to her requests; and when that answer was received it was found that Russian and Japanese demands were diametrically opposed.

On October 8th the Russian evacuation of Manchuria should have been completed; but not only were there no signs of the progress of such evacuation, but the Russian Minister at Peking was now formulating fresh demands on China, which must result in the virtual annexation of Manchuria.<sup>1</sup> Reports had, it would seem, reached the Russians of the activity of Japanese spies in Manchuria, who were rousing the hostility of the inhabitants, and especially of the Chinese Governor of Mukden, against the Russians. It was also reported that the Japanese intended to seize Seoul and the mouth of the Yalu, and were landing troops at Fusan.

At this same period Russia sought to arrive at an agreement with Great Britain, by which the latter should declare Manchuria to be beyond her sphere of interest, in return for a similar declaration on the part of Russia as regards the Yangtse Valley. To this, however, Great Britain demurred.

<sup>1</sup> *The Russo-Japanese Conflict*, p. 316.

China, bolstered up by Great Britain, the United States, and Japan, not only refused the Russian demands, but made treaties with the two last named by which Mukden and Antung were thrown open as "treaty ports," that is, proclaimed neutral. These treaties were signed on October the 8th; and on the 28th Russian troops seized Mukden, the capital of Manchuria.

On the Yalu, also, the Russians had, during the last few months, displayed much activity, obtaining concessions from the Koreans and gradually strengthening their position at Yongampo. Great Britain and the United States pressed the Korean Government to throw open to trade both Wiju and Yongampo; but to this the Russian Minister at Seoul was strongly opposed. So strong was the Russian Minister's influence with the Korean Government that he not only carried the day, but finally induced the Koreans to "declare their neutrality" at the outbreak of hostilities. The Viceroy thus sought to exclude Korea from the contest, and, thereby, to exclude the Japanese from that country. If Japanese troops invaded a neutral Korea, they would commit a breach of international law, and might, thereby, rouse the hostility of neutrals. If, on the other hand, they could be excluded from Korea, their superior land forces would be rendered useless to them; for, in view of the "invincibility" of the Russian fleet, they could land nowhere else but in Korea. It would have been a clever move if the Japanese had proved less resolute or courageous.



It may not be out of place at this moment to point out the miserable fate of a weak and inept nation, treated without the smallest consideration by powerful neighbours, its territories overrun, its inhabitants subjugated, very often suffering ninety per cent. of the horrors of war, and ultimately annexed. Such a fate is certainly to be avoided if patriotism and preparation can serve the purpose,—as they can.

On the 30th October Japan communicated to the Russian Minister her “irreducible minimum”; but even now the Russians could not understand that “the entire nation of Japan felt as one man that they had come to the greatest crisis known in their long history.” Or it is, perhaps, more probable that at this period the Russians, with the single exception of General Kuropatkin, were filled with profound contempt for the Japanese. And this contempt was not lessened by the tone of the Japanese reply. That reply was studiously moderate. Japan even made certain concessions. Russia undoubtedly interpreted these concessions as timidity, and, in spite of repeated applications for a reply, avoided answering until the 11th December.

When the answer did arrive it was found that the Russians had increased their demands. The Russians had, without doubt, been engaged too often in negotiations with half-savage and helpless nations and tribes to recognise when they were face to face with a virile and martial—and, we might add—a very clever race. These negotiations, and the attitude of the Japanese, served to increase the over-confidence

of the Russians in their own powers and invincibility. Nothing was to be feared from so mild a nation as the Japanese—"little yellow monkeys," as the Russians contemptuously termed them! This mental attitude of the Russians towards the Japanese—an attitude which was, apparently, carefully fostered by the latter—is an important point to every student of war; for in it is to be found the germ of the Russian defeat. Such an attitude can only result in carelessness, and carelessness in war or preparation for war is apt to bring a terrible retribution in its train.

On December 21st the Japanese reply was handed to the Russian Minister and also telegraphed to St. Petersburg. It was again couched in the most moderate terms; but it asked for a prompt reply. The Japanese Minister in St. Petersburg also warned—doubtless very mildly—the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs that if the two nations failed to arrive at an agreement "it might cause serious difficulties, even complications."

A Russian reply was forthcoming on the 6th January, 1904; but it abated nothing of its former demands.

On the 13th January the Japanese "begged the Russians to reconsider the situation" and urged the advisability of an early reply—"the Imperial Government further hope for an early reply from the Russian Government, since further delay in the solution of the question will be extremely disadvantageous to the two countries."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Russo-Japanese Conflict*, p. 339.

The Japanese Minister at St. Petersburg asked for a reply four times between the 13th January and 1st February, doubtless in the most courteous and mildly expressed terms.

On the 26th January the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs telegraphed to the Japanese Minister at St. Petersburg to the following effect: "In the opinion of the Imperial Japanese Government, a further prolongation of the present state of things being calculated to accentuate the gravity of the situation, it was their earnest hope that they would be honoured with an early reply, and that they wished to know at what time they might expect to receive the reply."<sup>1</sup>

The Russians continued, however, to temporise; for further Russian naval reinforcements were on their way to the Far East. These reinforcements consisted of one battleship, three cruisers, seven destroyers, and four torpedo boats, besides vessels of the "volunteer fleet" conveying troops and stores, under Admiral Virenus. Towards the end of January this fleet passed through the Suez Canal. It was a dramatic moment; for two fast cruisers, which had been bought by the Japanese in Genoa, but were manned by skeleton crews of British subjects, practically accompanied the Russian fleet through the canal. In view of the critical situation in the Far East, and the evident approach of hostilities, men wondered whether the Russians would seize or sink these two Japanese vessels. But the Russians evidently hoped

<sup>1</sup> *The Russo-Japanese Conflict*, p. 339.

to achieve a diplomatic triumph and to stave off hostilities—if these were really inevitable—until their reinforcements should have arrived; and they, accordingly, permitted the two Japanese cruisers to pass ahead of their fleet in the Red Sea. Thereafter the Japanese cruisers showed the Russians a clean pair of heels.

The Russian naval reinforcements could not reach Port Arthur before the end of February. The Siberian Railway was still broken at Lake Baikal; and though a connection had been commenced round the southern end of the lake, yet it could not be completed for several months, or, perhaps, for a year. And, in the meantime, all troops and stores must be transported across the lake, by steamer in the summer and by sledge in the winter. In the spring and autumn, when the ice was breaking up or forming, transport across the lake practically came to a standstill. Dalny had not been fortified, and neither were the fortifications of Port Arthur by any means complete. The projected fortifications at the Isthmus of Nan-shan had not been commenced owing to lack of funds. The troops in Manchuria, moreover, the “impenetrable veil,” had not yet been brought up to the required strength.

It will be seen that it was all to the advantage of the Russians to defer hostilities for another year, at least; and, with that object in view, it was essential to grant the Japanese no shadow of excuse to precipitate hostilities. For this was the auspicious moment for the Japanese, now or never! They had

brought their forces, both sea and land, to a remarkable state of efficiency in view of this very war. They had, so far as possible, completed their preparations down to the smallest detail. They were as strong as they could hope to be. The whole nation felt as one man ; it was actuated by the most ardent patriotism ; it was prepared to make any sacrifices to ensure victory. Further delay would be calculated to rouse irritation amongst the people and to destroy their faith in their leaders. The two cruisers, bought at Genoa, had passed well ahead of the Russian squadron in the Red Sea, and were now safe. The ice had not yet melted ; and the four Russian cruisers in Vladivostok were still obliged to enter or leave the port by a narrow channel cut by the ice-breaker. It was wise to strike before the Russian naval reinforcements now on their way could arrive within striking distance, and before the break up of the ice at Vladivostok. Hence, the action of the Russians at this critical moment is to us, now, almost incomprehensible.

At the end of January Russian troops were moved from Liao-yang to the Yalu ; while on the 21st, two battalions of infantry with artillery were despatched from Port Arthur to the same destination. On the 28th the Viceroy placed the Russian troops on the Yalu on a war footing ; on the 1st February the Governor of Vladivostok directed the Japanese Agent at that place to prepare to withdraw the Japanese residents, as he was under instructions to proclaim martial law ; and, between the 31st January and the 3rd February, the Russian fleet at Port Arthur left

the inner harbour, put to sea for a day, and anchored in the outer roadstead on the 4th.

It will be seen that these Russian movements constituted a direct and deliberate threat. It must have been the one opportunity of all others that the Japanese desired. It gave them the chance of precipitating hostilities, and, at the same time, of justifying their action in the eyes of the world. More than that, the movement of the Russian fleet into the outer roadstead placed it in a position peculiarly exposed to a sudden and unexpected blow, and if that blow were successful, the Russian fleet would require three days in which to escape into safety.

The reasons for the Russian movements which were to prove so disastrous have been given in the Russian official history of the war. It appears that, at the commencement of January, 1904, all information indicated that the Japanese were fully prepared, and that the occupation of Korea was imminent. It was feared that the Japanese would steal a march on the Russians, seize the line of the Yalu, and appear in force at Liao-yang and Hai-Cheng before the Russian concentration at those places was completed. It therefore became essential either to move the zone of the Russian concentration further to the north or to oppose and delay the Japanese advance. The Viceroy and his staff considered that the Yalu afforded a good line on which to delay the Japanese; and that it was necessary to seize that line before the Japanese could do so. The Viceroy therefore applied for authority to order mobilisation, and to push forward

a brigade of cavalry and a brigade of infantry with guns to the Yalu. Permission to push troops to the Yalu was, in the first instance, refused, on the grounds that it was necessary to oblige the Japanese to bear the onus of war, and therefore to commit the first act of hostility. In the meantime every action which could be construed into an act of hostility was to be avoided by the Russians. Further information was received, however, showing that the Japanese were more fully prepared than had been thought possible; and the Viceroy finally received permission to order mobilisation, declare martial law in Manchuria and in the fortresses, occupy such strategic points as he considered necessary in Manchuria, and despatch troops to the Yalu. These measures were adopted on the last days of January and the first days of February.

Meanwhile considerable discussion had arisen as to the action of the navy. In pursuance of the idea of throwing the onus of war on the Japanese the Russian fleet was ordered not to interfere with a Japanese disembarkation on the southern or eastern coasts of Korea; instructions were given to the Viceroy that the Russians would even acquiesce in a Japanese occupation of southern and eastern Korea.

On February the 3rd and 4th the Japanese Cabinet and Privy Councillors held a conference and decided on war. On the 5th at 2 p.m. instructions were telegraphed to the Japanese Minister at St. Petersburg to break off negotiations, and to express the

intention of the Japanese Government to "take such independent action as they may deem best to consolidate and defend their menaced position, as well as to protect the acquired rights and legitimate interest of the Empire."<sup>1</sup>

These instructions were executed in St. Petersburg at 4 p.m. on the same day. There was still no hint, it will be seen, that the Japanese meditated a sudden blow; and the Russians appear to have interpreted the ultimatum as expressing the intention to occupy Korea.

But, in the meantime, at 2 p.m., at the same hour at which the telegrams were despatched to the Japanese Minister in St. Petersburg, the Japanese fleet under Admiral Togo sailed from Sasebo.

One important step was to seize Seoul, the capital of Korea, and to open up Chemulpo as a port of disembarkation. A division of the fleet, escorting three transports conveying four battalions of infantry on a peace footing,<sup>2</sup> sailed for Chemulpo, the object being to destroy or capture the Russian war vessels in that harbour and to seize Seoul.

Admiral Togo, with the bulk of the fleet, was ordered to "defeat the Russian fleet," which was believed to be still in the roadstead outside Port Arthur.

A third squadron, under Admiral Kataoka, remained to guard the Korean Straits.

<sup>1</sup>For the full text of these instructions see *The Russo-Japanese Conflict*, pp. 342-344.

<sup>2</sup>About 2500 men.



At this same time the order to mobilise was issued to the army, while martial law was proclaimed throughout the country.

While the Japanese thus moved to strike, the Russian Committee of the Far East was engaged in a conference at St. Petersburg. The chief of the General Staff, General Sakharov, was called on for his opinion. He considered that a Japanese occupation of Korea would amount to an act of war; and he further expressed the opinion that the Japanese fleet might attack the Russian fleet without declaration of war in order to avert the danger of the interruption of the disembarkation of troops at Chemulpo. He recommended that the Russian fleet should sail to attack the Japanese. This conference was sitting at 11.30 a.m. on the 8th February, and resulted in instructions being telegraphed to the Viceroy directing him not to interfere with the Japanese so long as they landed only on the eastern, southern, and south-western coasts of Korea as far north as Chemulpo; but that if they passed north of the 38th parallel of latitude in the Gulf of Korea they were to be attacked.

When this telegram was sent the Japanese fleet was awaiting the fall of night to attack the Russian fleet.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES; THE OPERATIONS IN KOREA; AND THE BATTLE OF THE YALU.

THERE were, on the 8th February, 1904, a Japanese cruiser, two Russian ships of war—an old unarmoured gunboat and a first-class protected cruiser of 6500 tons—together with a Russian transport, and several neutral ships of war, in the harbour of Chemulpo.

On the 7th the cable communication with Port Arthur had been interrupted, and, at midnight on that day, the second-class Japanese cruiser, which had been lying at Chemulpo watching the Russians, weighed anchor and proceeded to sea. During the afternoon of the 8th the Russian gunboat, carrying despatches to Port Arthur, also put to sea, but quickly fell in with three Japanese torpedo boats. As the manœuvres of the Japanese torpedo craft excited suspicion, the Russian vessel opened fire on the Japanese, and returned to the harbour. Later in the afternoon the division of the Japanese fleet, with its transports, entered the harbour, and the disembarkation of the troops was commenced, without interference by the Russian ships of war, and

completed during the night. On the following morning the Japanese cruisers left the harbour.

The Russian Commander then received an intimation that unless he put to sea before noon he would be attacked in the harbour; and, at the same time, the neutral ships of war in the harbour received an intimation that hostilities had commenced between Japan and Russia. The neutral vessels protested against the infringement of Korean neutrality; while the two Russian vessels put to sea and were attacked by the Japanese squadron. The Russians, overwhelmed by the vastly superior Japanese force, returned to port, the cruiser badly damaged, and burnt their vessels, the crews taking refuge on board neutral ships of war. On the same day the Japanese troops occupied Seoul. Thus the cleverness of the Russians in inducing the Korean Government to declare its neutrality could not save them. The Japanese were fighting for their very existence; and, in such circumstances, a nation does not pay much regard to international law. Laws which are not upheld by force can always be broken with impunity.

On the night of the 8th-9th February momentous events had also occurred at Port Arthur. The Russian fleet was at anchor in the open roadstead, but under the guns of the fortress. During the 8th, according to Commander Semenoff, a Japanese vessel, with the Japanese Consul from Chefoo on board, had put in to Port Arthur; and, anchoring almost in the middle of the Russian fleet, had taken on board the Japanese residents in the fortress, and had sailed

before nightfall. It was evident, from this and other facts, to the Russian officers of the fleet that war was a matter of hours; and they recognised that this Japanese vessel would probably take note of the exact positions of the Russian ships of war.<sup>1</sup> Admiral Stark, who commanded the Russian squadron, had, it appears, issued orders on his own initiative that the entire personnel of the fleet was to be on board during the night, that communication with the shore during the night was prohibited, and that the fleet was to be prepared for possible attack. This, apparently, was the sole action which he was permitted to take on his own responsibility. He had, it would seem, applied for the Viceroy's permission to take the necessary precautions against torpedo attack, but had been refused. He had, thereupon, put his request in writing, and had received the answer in the Viceroy's own handwriting, and with his own green pencil,<sup>2</sup> "No; not yet," or, according to some accounts, "This is premature."

But an order had been issued—by whom is not known—that during the night of the 8th-9th the fleet was to be exercised in repelling torpedo attack; and four destroyers had, accordingly, been sent to sea as scouts. The order was, however, according to Commander Semenoff, rescinded, the destroyers being ordered to Dalny for some unknown reason.

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, this vessel steamed to Dalny, where it remained for the night.

<sup>2</sup> According to Commander Semenoff, the use of the Viceroy's green pencil was final; no further discussion was permitted.

This alteration of orders was not communicated to the fleet.<sup>1</sup>

About 11 p.m.,<sup>2</sup> at Port Arthur, torpedo boats were sighted to seaward showing lights. These were mistaken for the returning Russian destroyers, and the Russians only discovered their error with the explosion of the Japanese torpedoes. Two Russian battleships, the 'Tzesarevich' and 'Retvisan,' as well as a first-class protected cruiser, the 'Pallada,' were "holed," and, in attempting to re-enter the harbour, ran aground. The 'Tzesarevich' and 'Pallada' were hauled off the following day, but the 'Retvisan' remained aground. At 8 a.m. on the 9th the Russian fleet was reconnoitred by a division of the Japanese fleet, and about noon the Japanese fleet, which had waited about sixty miles east of Port Arthur, came up and attacked the Russians with long-range fire, inflicting damage on four additional Russian battleships and cruisers without themselves suffering damage.

Thus we see the first blow struck—an effective blow, which was to leave its impress on every phase of the war. The Japanese Admiral, Admiral Togo, reported on the 9th that the Russians appeared to

<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting to know the exact reason for the despatch of the Russian destroyers to Dalny. In the light of after events, we may perhaps speculate that it was due to some "reliable information" which had been received by the Russians. Is it merely a queer coincidence that, while three Japanese destroyer flotillas were despatched to attack the Russian fleet at Port Arthur, two were sent to Dalny? It is evident that the Japanese expected to find a portion of the Russian fleet at Dalny. Why?

<sup>2</sup> The Japanese give the time of the attack as 12.15 a.m.

be demoralised. It was true. The Russians had been surprised. The conviction of invincibility had been proved to be unfounded; foolish optimism was already giving way to despondency.

Russian sailors had already lost faith in their leaders. "We had just ceased fire when our good-natured, fat little friend S—— turned towards Golden Hill with clenched fists. Tears of rage stood in his eyes, and with a choking voice he cried: 'Did they expect this, these infallible, high and mighty gentlemen, these ——?' (His words cannot be repeated.) Most people thought the same."<sup>1</sup>

When troops, or the personnel of a fleet, lose faith in their leaders, it means demoralisation.

But worse was to occur. An attempt was made (according to Commander Semenoff) to burden "Admiral Stark with the entire responsibility." It was said that the Admiral, with many captains and officers, had gone ashore to celebrate the Admiral's birthday. It was, apparently, untrue. Admiral Stark was, it is said, nearly tried by court-martial; but the charge was dropped, for the reason that he had in his pocket a certain document with "No; not yet" written on it in the Viceroy's own handwriting, and with his own green pencil.

When, in time of disaster, those responsible endeavour to fix the blame on to subordinates, the attempt inevitably results in loss of morale; for not only have the subordinate ranks lost their faith in the capacity of their leaders, but they now distrust

<sup>1</sup> "Rasplata," p. 624.

their honesty and loyalty. When a leader endeavours to shift responsibility from his own shoulders and fix it on those of a subordinate, he commits the most detestable of all military crimes, and one that is calculated to prove fatal to the discipline and enthusiasm of any armed force.

In addition to the demoralisation of the Russian fleet, there now also arose ill-feeling between navy and army. If we are to believe the writer of *The Truth about Port Arthur*, the state of affairs within the fortress was pitiable. The demoralisation of the navy affected the garrison. The latter, in its laudable efforts to re-establish morale, was inculcating contempt for the Japanese. "Why are the Japanese fools?" the Russian officer is said to have asked his men on parade; and the men had to answer in chorus, "because they fight in extended order."

And the Japanese? Their success, it is evident, was not to be measured by the material damage they had inflicted on certain ships of war, nor by the losses they had inflicted on the personnel. It was immeasurable. Their success had been due to secrecy and thoroughness in preparation, to resolution, courage, and rapidity in execution. That is all! But think what these words represent. They represent about thirty years of continuous national effort. There was organisation, by means of which the armed forces were not only rendered capable of immediate as well as prolonged effort, but by which they became vast national schools in which the whole mass of the people had been taught patriotism, or loyalty to the

great ideal known as the "Country," the spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion to duty, the qualities which are comprised in the Japanese term "bushido." With the Japanese patriotism and religion were synonymous terms. There was discipline—none of the "go as you please" discipline that the British people favour, but the virile and vigorous type of a martial nation where the officer will shoot down without hesitation or remorse the man who refuses to push forward in face of the enemy, or the man who, on active service, refuses to obey. Men, even the best of them, are, after all, animals, and, like race horses, usually require a whip at a time of great mental and physical exhaustion if continued effort is required of them. It is discipline, and fear of the officer, which must constitute that whip; and, without it, the utmost endeavour cannot be obtained from troops; and, unless the utmost is obtained, battles will not be won. But, at the same time, this discipline must not be so rigid as to check the spirit of initiative or hamper originality; and that merely means to say that it must be tempered by education and knowledge. It was only by means of this stringent discipline—not discipline in the armed forces alone, but in the nation as a whole—that secrecy as to their real intentions was obtained.

There was the Japanese fleet ready to move at a moment's notice; there were the Japanese transports awaiting their contingents of troops; there were the troops themselves who received orders to embark as late as 6 p.m. on the 5th February; there were the



Japanese residents of Port Arthur and Vladivostok to be withdrawn lest they should suffer at the hands of an infuriated enemy, and these had been warned to be in readiness. There were Japanese battalions already, before the outbreak of hostilities, in occupation of many important points in Korea, together with some 16,000 reservists—not 6000 as estimated by the Russians—ready with their arms and equipment to control the country. Supply depots had been formed at various points, while *Etappen posts* had been established between Fusan and Seoul. More important than all was the Japanese territorial army, which was additional to the permanent army, and which consisted of fifty-two regiments, organised in brigades, numbering over 80,000 men, and composed of troops fitted in every respect to take their place in the first line.

The Russians knew that Korea had been prepared to serve as a base of operations; they knew of the supply depots, *Etappen posts*, transports, that certain points in Korea were already occupied by Japanese troops, and that the permanent Japanese army was ready to be transported at short notice over sea. But they knew little of the territorial army; they believed that these reserve troops were unorganised and were intended to fight only in Japan in defence of their homes. The Minister of War estimated, from all the reports, that the Japanese forces when mobilised would number 304,000 men; that of these 150,000 could be put across the sea, to be followed later by, perhaps, another 60,000. The Russian

official history states that the Japanese actually mobilised during the war 2,727,000 men, of whom they actually employed 1,185,000;<sup>1</sup> of these their expeditionary force consisted, in the first instance, of 206,000 men; and, at the end of the war, they had actually in the field 442,000 men.

It was a remarkable achievement on the part of the Japanese to keep secret the strength of their forces. For years before the war they had adopted measures to maintain secrecy. Foreign military attachés were carefully “shepherded” and permitted to see nothing; and, in addition, they would appear to have been deliberately misinformed. Immediately after the Chino-Japanese war the Russian military attachés reported that the Japanese army was efficient to a degree, and fitted to meet the most highly trained armies of Europe; but after 1900 the attachés formed an altogether different opinion of the Japanese army. It was said that the Japanese possessed neither originality nor imagination, that they had but copied European organisation and methods without grasping in the least the spirit of the thing; that their infantry was indifferent, afraid of the bayonet and of night operations, unable to march or withstand the strain of war; that their artillery was slow and ignorant; that their cavalry was quite worthless and utterly ignorant of the uses to which cavalry should

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to notice that in our *Statesman's Year Book* of 1903 Japan's total land forces were given as 630,000 of all ranks. General Kuropatkin's estimate, based on the number of killed and wounded Japanese, puts the numbers actually engaged against the Russians from first to last at 1,500,000 men.

be put ; that their generals were ignorant, feeble, and lacking in initiative ; and, finally, that the Japanese army was quite unfitted to meet European troops. Even General Kuropatkin, after his visit to Japan in 1903, formed an entirely false conception of the Japanese army. He considered that the Japanese army was a factor to be reckoned with, but that it was ruined by the absence of all religious sentiment ; and that the love of country, of the Emperor, and of the family formed but a poor substitute. Yet there are not wanting instances in history where patriotism has been raised to the dignity of a religion, and for purposes of war it is, perhaps, the most effective of all religions. It is certainly a mistake to despatch the Commander-in-chief designate to take stock of a possible enemy. General Kuropatkin, being permitted to see just what suited the Japanese and no more, formed an entirely erroneous impression of his country's enemies ; but, on the other hand, there is no doubt that the Japanese formed an extremely accurate estimate of General Kuropatkin's character, capacity, and military knowledge.

It is said that the Japanese are an intensely secretive race ; there is reason to believe that they are also extremely clever and courageous. Let us glance at the courage displayed by Japanese statesmen. It was no light thing to precipitate hostilities in this fashion. The Japanese were a heathen nation, Asiatics, about to attack suddenly, unexpectedly, but deliberately, one of the great Christian nations of the world. How would this action be regarded

throughout the civilised world? The Russians would assuredly endeavour to show it in lurid colours, as the act of savages, of a nation beyond the pale of Christendom. Could British and American sympathy be trusted to see through such representations? And there was this, also, to be considered: Great Britain, as well as Russia and France, held vast possessions in Asia. It was all very well for her to display sympathy with Japan, and even to afford assistance with a view to checking Russian expansion and aggression; but how would she view the decisive defeat, such as Japan had projected, of a European nation by an Asiatic people?

If she sympathised with a sudden and unexpected—and, as the Russians would term it, a dastardly—blow deliberately delivered by Asiatics against Europeans, could she herself expect sympathy or assistance from Christendom if she were suddenly attacked in like fashion by one of her many subject races, or by the Afghans, the Abyssinians, or the Boers? Was it not possible that motives of policy, combined with the outcry of the peace party in Great Britain, assisted by Russian representations and by the veiled threats of France and Germany—might not all these prove too strong for British loyalty towards her ally? As events turned out Great Britain stood firm; for Japan cleverly answered and disproved, on the instant, the charges against her national morality brought forward by the Russians. She was able to point to the Russian actions at the end of January and the commencement of February

and to the continuous increase of the Russian forces ; and to show that, in view of Russian threats, a sudden and unexpected blow was her one hope of defending her national existence. And, as we have seen, moreover, the Japanese were materially assisted by the somewhat peculiar morality which had been displayed by the Russians themselves.

It seems probable that the decision to strike suddenly and unexpectedly was arrived at before 1902, before Japan had concluded her alliance with Great Britain—it seems probable that, even as early as that period, she had decided that her one great hope of success lay in rendering impotent by a sudden blow the Russian naval power in the Far East ; and that, having reached that decision, her diplomacy was primarily directed to preparing the justification of her projected action, by the display of remarkable forbearance, verging indeed on humility, and by the preparation of the Press of neutral countries.

But let us think of the knowledge, resolution, and courage required of her statesmen. For the point is that it was these statesmen who directed this blow ; and if they had lacked these qualities, or if their attention had been diverted from this great national problem to the struggle for place and power, if, instead of being statesmen they had been politicians, this sudden, unexpected, and effective blow would have been quite impossible to the Japanese nation. The finest fleet, or the most magnificent army in the universe, is helpless unless the national leaders, the

1904.

## Declaration of War

statesmen, have also been trained to the study and conduct of war, which is the ultimate solution of most international problems. For the finest fighting force, if surprised, is at the mercy of its adversaries; and, at the outbreak of hostilities, the power to surprise, or to avoid surprise, lies in the hands of statesmen, and not in those of generals and admirals.

On the 10th February, some thirty-six hours after the first blow had been struck, both nations formally declared war. As is usual in such cases, each sought to lay the blame for war on the enemy. The Russians asserted that their answer to the final Japanese note had already reached the Russian Legation in Tokio before the Japanese had broken off negotiations, and that with a little more patience on the part of the Japanese all would have been well. So it would, undoubtedly—from the Russian point of view. They asserted, moreover, that in breaking off negotiations the Japanese Minister in St. Petersburg had privately expressed to the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs the hope that “the rupture of diplomatic relations would be confined to as short a time as possible,” thereby giving the Russians to suppose that no hostile action was intended. They also affirmed that the Japanese had cut the telegraphic communication of the Korean Government in order that the Russian ships of war in Korean ports might not be notified of the imminence of hostilities. They also pointed out that the rupture of diplomatic relations does not necessarily involve war; and they therefore

concluded that the unforeseen Japanese attack on the Russian fleet was a treacherous and revolting violation of international law.

To these accusations the Japanese found no difficulty in replying.

Thereupon there ensued throughout Europe and America an academical discussion as to which combatant was in the right and which in the wrong. The point has not yet been settled, and is unlikely to be settled to all time. The sympathisers of Japan believed in the righteousness of the Japanese cause, and therefore in the integrity of the Japanese conduct; while the sympathisers with Russia agreed with that country that the conduct of Japan was both revolting and treacherous—but successful, yes, very successful! It will, perhaps, be sufficient if we merely draw attention to the fact that the two nations were fighting for the possession of Port Arthur, the property of the Chinese, and of Korea, the property of the Koreans. It is true that the Japanese asserted that they were fighting not for Korea, but on behalf of the Koreans—"the maintenance of the independence and territorial integrity of Korea is one of the objects of the war."<sup>1</sup> But in the light of later events this benevolent declaration may be regarded merely as a useful figure of speech; for Korea was formally annexed by the Japanese in August, 1910.

Every man with a little common-sense knew perfectly well at the time, of course, that if once Japan got her grip on Korea she would never relinquish it

<sup>1</sup> *The Russo-Japanese Conflict*, p. 358.

unless forced to do so. Nations do not go to war out of pure benevolence.

In the meantime the Japanese were by no means content to rest on their laurels. On the night of the 14th February their destroyers again attacked, but this time with slight success. The Russians were prepared, and one third-class cruiser only was damaged. But it had a result, inasmuch as a great part of the Russian fleet was withdrawn into the harbour to avoid these torpedo attacks. Misfortune, however, dogged the Russians; for, a few days earlier, one of their two mine-laying vessels had been sunk by one of its own mines. The Russians had now suddenly recognised the possibility of a Japanese landing in the neighbourhood of the fortress. They had suddenly recognised the inefficacy of a "fleet in being" which it was desired should remain in being; and, as a consequence, they commenced to lay mines in the various bays which the Japanese might utilise as landing-places. It was thought that the mine-layer had been destroyed by Japanese torpedo boats, and a third-class cruiser, the 'Boyarín,' was despatched to Talien Bay to attack the Japanese. But the plans of the mine-fields had been lost with the mine-layer; and, as a consequence, the 'Boyarín' also struck a mine and was lost. Then, during the night of the 23rd-24th February, the Japanese made a determined attempt to block the entrance to Port Arthur harbour by sinking ballast-laden vessels in the fairway, as well as to torpedo the battleship 'Retvisan,' which was still aground near the mouth



of the harbour. The Japanese attempt failed. The Russians, being on the alert, sighted the vessels as they approached, and, though they were unaware of their object, nevertheless, their suspicions being aroused, they opened fire. The storm of shell, together with the glare of the searchlights, rendered it impossible for the Japanese to locate the mouth of the harbour; and the ballast ships were sunk in the wrong places. On the night of the 24th-25th the Japanese delivered another torpedo attack.

On the 25th the Japanese bombarded such Russian ships of war as were outside the harbour at extreme range, and caught and destroyed a Russian torpedo boat which had been sent to ascertain whether there was any truth in a reported Japanese landing in Pigeon Bay.

On the 26th the Japanese fleet again appeared off Port Arthur; but the Russian fleet, which was devoting its attention to the repair of the damaged vessels, was not permitted to give battle. Admiral Makarov had already left Russia to take command of the Port Arthur fleet. He was, apparently, the one leader in whom Russian sailors had faith; and his arrival was anxiously awaited.

In the meantime, shortly after the commencement of hostilities, the Russian cruisers at Vladivostok had put to sea and found and destroyed one small coasting vessel. But the Japanese lines of communication across the Sea of Japan, against which they were intended to operate, did not apparently exist. Admiral Togo, when he became confident, about the end of

February, that the Russian fleet at Port Arthur did not dare to face him, despatched seven cruisers to Vladivostok to endeavour to bring the Russian cruisers to battle. The attempt failed, and resulted merely in the bombardment of the fortress at long range.

And now, while we are awaiting the arrival of Admiral Makarov, let us turn to the operations which had taken place on land.

Fusan, Masampo, and Gensan had been seized and garrisoned by Japanese troops simultaneously with the seizure of Chemulpo and Seoul, and the Japanese had declared their intention of assuming control of the whole administration of Korea.

The Japanese had originally intended, as we have seen, to land the 12th Division at Fusan, to march overland to Seoul. But the success of the fleet, and the passive attitude adopted by the Russian fleet, rendered it possible to transport the troops by sea. The 12th Division completed its mobilisation and arrived at Nagasaki on the 14th February. The first group sailed on the 15th, and by the 21st the whole division had landed at Chemulpo; and on this date a small party of Japanese infantry seized Ping-yang, 150 miles north of Seoul, driving off a Russian Cossack patrol.

On the 23rd this party of Japanese was reinforced by the cavalry of the 12th Division, posts with supplies having already been prepared for the rapid march of the cavalry. By the 18th March the bulk of the 12th Division had reached Ping-yang, Anju

had been occupied, and an outpost line established on the Chechen River.

By the 9th March the Guard and 2nd Divisions had been mobilised and concentrated at Hiroshima in readiness to embark. The embarkation was delayed, however, until the ice at Chinampo should melt. Disembarkation became possible at that place on the 10th March, and an advanced force was immediately despatched to reinforce the 12th Division at Anju, for there was a prospect of fighting at that place inasmuch as Russian troops were believed to be on the Yalu and south of it in some force; and reports had, moreover, been received that their main forces were concentrating at Liao-yang and Feng-huang-Cheng. General Kuroki, who was designated to command the 1st Army, landed at Chinampo on the 17th March, and there he heard that the nearest hostile troops consisted of some 1500 to 2000 Russian cavalry on the Yalu between Paksan and Wiju.

By the 29th March the Guard and 2nd Divisions had disembarked at Chinampo, and the toilsome march northward began. The thaw, which had already commenced, had rendered the roads almost impassable—even those which had been repaired by the engineers. “Guns, carriages, and transport carts sank to the axles in the mud, and men and horses floundered through with difficulty.”<sup>1</sup> Transport difficulties were, however, temporarily overcome by employing 10,000 Korean coolies.

<sup>1</sup> *The Russo-Japanese War*, Part i., by the British General Staff.

Let us now glance at the nature of the country in which these operations were about to occur.

West of Vladivostok and of Possiet Bay there rises a great mass of mountains, the highest peaks being as much as 9000 feet. In these mountains are the sources of the great rivers of Manchuria, the Tumen, the Yalu, the Hun, and the Tai-tzu. From this central mass ranges run to the west, south-west, and south. That to the south forms, so to speak, the spinal column of the Korean Peninsula, much as the Apennines traverse the length of Italy. It runs closer to the eastern than to the western coast, completely separating the two, is heavily wooded, rugged, unmapped, and crossed by but few mountain tracks.

The range running from the central mass to the westward is the watershed between the Hun and Tai-tzu Rivers, gradually decreasing in height towards its western extremity, and finally sinking into the plain a few miles east of the railway between Mukden and Liao-yang.

That running to the south-west divides the valleys of the Tai-tzu and Yalu. It is known as the Fenshui-ling, and in reality consists of many parallel ranges. It rises to a height of some 5000 feet, and runs right through the Liao-tung and Kuan-tung Peninsula, gradually decreasing in height, to Port Arthur.

The mountainous area, generally speaking, lies eastward of the Eastern Chinese Railway, which runs at the foot of the mountains. The mountains,

indeed, give place with remarkable suddenness to the plains at the railway line. To the west of the railway a vast flat plain extends for "one hundred and fifty miles, or more, westwards to the Mongolian hills. This plain, consisting of rich alluvial soil brought down by the great rivers Liao, Hun, and Tai-tzu, is thickly peopled, and highly cultivated, though liable to become swampy in wet weather."<sup>1</sup>

The mountainous regions, as is to be expected, are far less thickly populated than the plains; nevertheless, there are numerous villages in all the valleys, each with its little spot of cultivation. "In the plain," writes Major Bird, "the villages consist of groups of thatched houses, with walls of mud, or of sun-dried bricks plastered with mud, each standing in a garden surrounded by a more or less thick and well-built wall, or by a fence of plaited millet stalks. In the hills, houses and walls are of roughly shaped stones, sometimes cemented, and the roofs are of thatch, slate, or tile."<sup>2</sup> Major Bird also tells us that the Chinese towns "are all of one pattern, square built, and surrounded by a crenellated wall twenty to thirty feet high, and at top eight to ten feet wide."

There are but two real roads in Manchuria and Korea; and even these are execrable. The one, the Imperial road, runs from Peking to Hsin-min-tun, Mukden, and Liao-yang; and, thence, turns south-

<sup>1</sup> *The Strategy of the Russo-Japanese War*, by Brevet-Major Bird, D.S.O.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 9.

east to Korea, passing over the Fen-shui-ling by the Mo-tien-ling pass to Feng-huang-Cheng and Antung. The Yalu was unbridged, and could only be crossed by fords. The road continues south by Anju and Ping-yang to Seoul, the capital of Korea. Seoul was also connected with Fusan at the southern extremity of Korea by a road, while a railway was under construction, the work being supervised by the Japanese.

The other great road ran from Liao-yang to Port Arthur.

In addition to these two there were numerous cart-tracks connecting the villages throughout the country ; but none of the roads, not even the two great roads, were metalled. According to Major Bird the Chinese farmer is in the habit of using the road surface as manure ; and, consequently, the roads are often below the surface of the surrounding country. In wet weather they become practically impassable, the country carts sinking to their axles. The two great roads differ from the village roads only in that they are broader, being some thirty to forty feet wide.

In addition to the great roads we have mentioned, there are one or two which exercised an important influence on the military operations, and which are, therefore, worthy of special attention. In Korea roads connect Gensan on the east coast with Seoul and Ping-yang on the west coast. In the war with China in 1894 a Japanese force landing at Gensan crossed the mountains to co-operate in an attack on the Chinese at Ping-yang. There is also a road

running to the north-east from Anju in Korea to Chyang-syong on the Yalu ; and from the latter place one road ran by Sai-ma-chi to Pen-hsi-hu, and so to Liao-yang and Mukden ; while another ran further to the eastward by Huai-jen-Hsien, to Ying-pan, and so to Mukden and Tieh-ling. Roads led from Gensan and Kapsan past the head waters of the Yalu and through the great mountains, to Kirin, Mukden, and Tieh-ling. These were, however, known to be mere mountain tracks quite unfitted for wheeled vehicles of any description. Nevertheless, in certain eventualities, if, for instance, the Japanese were able to effectively occupy Korea and operate from thence against the Russians on the railway line, the existence of any road, however bad, from the east coast of Korea by which the Japanese could advance secretly on Mukden was calculated to render the Russians extremely nervous for their left flank and line of communications. Mountain roads also existed which led from Possiet Bay to Kirin ; and it was possible that the Japanese might utilise this route as a means of striking at the Russian communications.

There is a regular rainy season in Manchuria and Korea which lasts during July, August, and September. The rain falls "in bursts of from three to eight days, separated by bright intervals." During the actual rain-storms rivers become floods, and the roads become altogether impassable for wheel traffic. The winter commences, however, in October and lasts until March, the thermometer constantly falling to zero in the day-time. The sea in the neighbourhood

of the coast becomes frozen, and the greater number of the harbours ice-bound for from four to five months. The harbours of Japan, those in the southern half of Korea, and Port Arthur and Dalny are, however, ice-free. The whole country, also, is hard frozen, troops being able to cross the rivers on the ice, and to move freely on the roads. When the thaw occurs in March and April the roads again become almost impassable; but for a short period only, for the hot sun quickly dries up the country.

In the mountainous regions supplies, both of grain and live stock (chiefly pigs), are scanty, barely sufficient for the needs of the inhabitants. In Korea considerable areas in the valleys are cultivated, rice being grown. In the great Manchurian plains west of the railway, however, vast areas are under cultivation; while live stock can be obtained from Mongolia through Hsin-min-tun and Mukden.

It will thus be seen that both Korea and Southern Manchuria were inhospitable countries in which to conduct war on a large scale. Few supplies, impassable roads, but little transport, rugged mountains, and a rigorous climate must, of necessity, render the movement and subsistence of large forces a problem of great difficulty. Mobility, the power of moving troops rapidly, is everything in war; the finest plans must break down unless they can be executed with despatch. The great Napoleon owed most of his successes largely to the remarkable marching power of his men, and to the manner in which he utilised the resources of the country. But,



in operations in Korea and Manchuria, marching power would depend largely on the foresight exercised by the combatants, and the preparations they had made in peace time to overcome the almost insuperable difficulties inherent in the theatre of hostilities.

In view of the weakness of the Russians, General Kuroki determined to seize points in advance without waiting to concentrate his whole force. An advanced guard of seven squadrons of cavalry, two batteries of mountain artillery, and five battalions of infantry, numbering, perhaps, some 5000 to 6000 men, were pushed forward to cover the construction of bridges over the Chechen River; and these seized Paksan by the 25th, the Russian cavalry retreating on Wiju.

It is worth noting that this advanced guard was about three times the numbers of the hostile forces it might expect to meet, and was, moreover, composed of all arms, while the Russians consisted of cavalry alone. The Japanese, evidently, did not intend to be outnumbered at the first serious land engagement of the war. Owing to supply difficulties, however, it was found necessary to reduce this advanced guard by two battalions, and, at the same time, to push it forward up the coast road in order to open up new points along the coast to which supplies might be brought by sea. The first engagement occurred at Tiessu. From this place the Guard cavalry, supported by infantry, expelled some six hundred Russian cavalry. On the 28th March supplies were brought up to, and landed at, Anju.

On the 1st April the advanced guard pushed forward, while on the 4th its cavalry entered Wiju and Yongampo, on the left bank of the Yalu. On this latter date the 12th Division reached Tiessu followed by the Guard and 2nd Divisions in the order named. A delay of some days occurred owing to heavy storms and floods which broke down many bridges; but by the 21st April the army was concentrated south of Wiju, drawing its supplies from Risiaho, Boto, and Quiempo.

The disposition of the troops was as follows: A flank guard, consisting of three battalions of infantry, one squadron of cavalry, and two mountain batteries which had marched by Unsan, had arrived at Chyang-syong. The 12th Division was south-east of Wiju, the Guard south, and the 2nd Division south-west. of the town.

Thus the 1st Army had marched a distance of 130 miles in six weeks—roughly about twenty-one miles a week, or three miles a day. And yet, as our official account states, the advance was by no means slow in view of the difficulties of supply and movement over the almost impassable roads. The rate of movement is in startling contrast to that which the French and German General Staffs expect of their Army Corps on the excellent roads of Western Europe. Nevertheless, the Japanese troops were, from all accounts, if anything superior in marching qualities to the troops of these two nations at that time; and it is, indeed, the case that the nations of Europe have taken seriously to heart the lessons taught them

and the example set them by the Japanese infantry, in marching capacity and endurance.

Let us now leave the 1st Japanese Army in position on the Yalu, methodically perfecting its preparations to force the passage of the river and bring to battle the Russian troops which could be seen—the numbers of which could indeed be counted—on the further bank of the river, and which consisted of infantry and artillery as well as cavalry.

On the 15th February General Kuropatkin had, in his capacity as Minister of War, presented to the Czar a memorandum on the situation in the Far East.

“The plan of campaign,” he wrote, “should be simple :

1. The struggle of the fleets for the mastery of the sea ;

2. The disembarkation of the Japanese : operations to prevent it ;

3. Defensive operations, combined with the extensive employment of irregular warfare, until the concentration of sufficient forces ;

4. Assumption of the offensive ;

- (a) Expulsion of the Japanese from Manchuria ;

- (b) Expulsion of the Japanese from Korea ;

5. Disembarkation in Japan. Defeat of the Japanese territorial troops. Struggle against a popular rising.

General Kuropatkin estimated that it would be necessary to concentrate over 200,000 men in Manchuria before it would be possible to assume the offensive. He considered it possible that the Russian

army might be obliged to retreat beyond Tieh-ling, and recommended the fortification of the defiles at that place and also of Harbin. "Above all," he wrote, "it seems to me that during the first part of the campaign we ought to avoid the piecemeal defeat of our forces. No terrain, no locality, should be regarded by us of sufficient importance to warrant the risk of permitting the Japanese to gain a victory over our advanced troops."

He anticipated that the Japanese would ultimately be forced back to the line Ping-yang—Gensan, where the great battle of the war, prior to the invasion of Japan, would be fought.

After reading this memorandum the Emperor appointed General Kuropatkin to command the Russian army in the Far East, but under the orders of Admiral Alexiev, who still remained Viceroy and Commander-in-chief of all the Russian Forces, both naval and military, in the Far East. The appointment of General Kuropatkin was also in accordance with the desire of public opinion, for he was a soldier with a great reputation.

He left St. Petersburg on March 12th, and arrived at Liao-yang on March 28th. He gives the distribution of the Russian forces on the latter date.

The available field force of fifty-nine battalions, thirty-nine squadrons, and 140 guns (in addition to the garrisons of Vladivostok and the Kuan-tung Peninsula) was divided into a central mass with two wings—or "detaining forces," also called "strategic advanced guards"—pushed out along the most

probable lines by which the Japanese might advance.

The central mass, consisting of twenty-nine battalions, ten squadrons, and forty-eight guns, was about Liao-yang and Anshanchan.

The "detaining force," or "strategic advanced guard," or "strategic rear guard"—as it might, perhaps, better be termed—or "isolated detachment"—as it might best of all be termed—on the Yalu, consisted of eight battalions, twenty-four guns, and eighteen squadrons with six guns.

The Southern Detachment, consisting of twenty battalions, six squadrons, and fifty-four guns, was posted in the area Hai-Cheng—Ta-shih-chiao—Ying-Kou—Kaiping. One regiment of three battalions, with four guns, was allotted to the protection of the Viceroy's headquarters.

In Port Arthur there were fourteen battalions, besides fortress artillery and sappers, as a garrison. In the Kuan-tung Peninsula were twelve battalions, twenty guns, and one squadron of Cossacks as a mobile force based on the fortress.

At Vladivostok was a garrison of twelve battalions, nine squadrons, and thirty-two guns.

On his arrival in Liao-yang General Kuropatkin immediately reinforced the detachment on the Yalu, gradually bringing it up to a strength of twenty-one battalions,<sup>1</sup> twenty-four squadrons, sixty-two guns,

<sup>1</sup> These numbers are taken from the conferences held by the Russian General Staff after the war. General Kuropatkin gives the strength as eighteen battalions; while our own official account gives it as

and eight machine guns, numbering 25,000 men, of which 18,000 were infantry.

The Russian forces were organised in army corps. Each corps consisted of two divisions; each division consisted of two brigades; each brigade consisted of two infantry regiments. In the European corps (10th, 17th, etc.) each infantry regiment consisted of four battalions, but in the Siberian army corps each infantry regiment consisted of three battalions. Thus a European army corps consisted of thirty-two battalions with 108-112 guns, while a Siberian army corps consisted of twenty-four battalions with sixty-four guns. Each corps also possessed a battalion of sappers, with one or two cavalry regiments. With some corps was a battery of horse artillery; with others a battery of howitzers; while the 10th corps possessed a mountain battery.

Towards the end of April the 1st Siberian Corps was on the railway between Liao-yang and Kaiping. The 2nd Siberians had one division near Liao-yang and one division, composed of reserve troops, *en route* from Harbin to Mukden. One brigade and twenty-four guns of the 10th, and a similar force of the 17th Corps, were along the railway south of Liao-yang. The Trans-Baikal Cavalry Division of twenty-four squadrons, under General Rennenkampf, was near Liao-yang, as were also twelve squadrons which were as yet unbrigaded.

twenty-four battalions, besides cavalry and guns. The volume of the *Russian Official History* dealing with this period has not yet been published.

The 3rd Siberian Army Corps was on the Yalu, together with General Mishchenko's Trans-Baikal Cossack Brigade, consisting of four cavalry regiments, or twenty-four squadrons, with six guns.

It will be seen that far from reducing the strength of the infantry with the Yalu detachment, it was largely increased. It was, at the time, evident to all soldiers that this Russian detachment was in an extremely precarious position. The military correspondent of the *Times* wrote in April, 1904, as follows :

"The Russians on the Yalu are thus much exposed, and if they elect to stand here they deserve to suffer for it."

The Japanese fleet had already "drawn first blood," and the Russian fleet had been forced to adopt a passive attitude. The Russian troops were, nevertheless, over-confident to a degree, believing that each Russian soldier was equal to three Japanese, and, indeed, in the words of the Russian General Staff conferences, "regarding the Japanese with positive disdain." Hence, it would seem to have been more than ever important to avoid placing a detachment of the army in a position in which it was liable to be overwhelmed by numbers.

But, it may be argued, the Russian detachment was posted behind a broad and unfordable river—an admirable line of defence. Unfortunately, however, a river line which is so fondly believed to constitute an admirable line of defence more often serves as a screen behind which the assailant can manoeuvre, and from which he can strike suddenly and unexpectedly.

General Kuropatkin was a highly educated soldier with a European reputation, and it seems absurd to suppose that he failed to recognise the danger in which this detachment stood. How came it, then, that he had failed to withdraw it from its precarious position after the initial reverses at sea? Was he not aware that the Japanese had landed in Korea and were advancing to the Yalu, probably in overwhelming force? Or was it the case, perhaps, that he was merely executing the orders of a superior?

It is essential to consider these points carefully, for not only had the Russian defeat on the Yalu the most far-reaching consequences, but the actual powers held by General Kuropatkin and his relation to the Viceroy also materially influenced the whole course of the struggle.

General Kuropatkin was, at the outbreak of hostilities, Minister of War, and was in Russia. It will be remembered that he had urged the reinforcement of the garrison of Port Arthur when war appeared probable: and it had, in consequence, been decided to strengthen it by the addition of the 3rd East Siberian Rifle Division. Admiral Alexiev, the Viceroy, had, however, despatched this division to the Yalu just before the outbreak of hostilities, and it was this very movement of troops which had given the Japanese the excuse they desired.

On February 11th, when Kuropatkin heard of the reverse suffered by the Russian fleet and of the withdrawal of the 3rd East Siberian Rifle Division from Port Arthur, his fears for that fortress were again



aroused, and he telegraphed to the Viceroy urging that the above division should be replaced at Port Arthur by the 9th East Siberian Rifle Division, then under formation. The Viceroy, however, did not concur.

On February 20th, General Kuropatkin was appointed "to the command of the Manchurian Army." On February 24th, he again telegraphed to the Viceroy as follows :

"If Port Arthur is weakly garrisoned, and should be besieged, I might be tempted by that fact to assume the offensive before there has been sufficient time to concentrate our forces. It is for this reason that I have already advised the concentration of the 9th Division in Kuan-tung to replace the 3rd."

The Viceroy again disagreed, asserting that "separate operations against the fortress would only be really worth undertaking if the enemy could make certain of seizing it by a *coup de main*, and the moment for this had passed."<sup>1</sup>

Here, again, we have the Viceroy's ideas ; and it must not be forgotten that Admiral Alexiev had been given control over operations military as well as naval.

Now for General Kuropatkin's ideas.

On February 15th and March 4th he submitted two memoranda to the Czar, of which he quotes the first : "In the first phase of the campaign our main object should be to prevent the destruction of our forces in detail. The apparent importance of any single locality or position (fortresses excepted) should

<sup>1</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. ii. p. 208.

not lead us into the great error of holding it in insufficient force, which would bring about the very result we are so anxious to prevent. While gradually growing in numbers and preparing to take the offensive, we should only move forward when sufficiently strong, and when supplied with everything necessary for an uninterrupted advance lasting over a fairly long period.”<sup>1</sup>

Holding such views as these, it seems absurd to suppose that General Kuropatkin would willingly have left a detachment on the Yalu 133 miles distant from the main concentration of his army. Unfortunately, General Kuropatkin has not quoted his memorandum of March 4th;<sup>2</sup> but it seems possible that he urged the recall of the detachment, and was overruled. The fact, moreover, that at this period he commenced the fortification of positions at Liaoyang and Tieh-ling, fifty miles north of Mukden, is clear evidence that he had not altered his conception of retreating, if necessary, to Harbin before fighting a decisive battle.<sup>3</sup>

We have further reason to believe that this is the true explanation, in that General Kuropatkin issued orders to General Sasulitch,<sup>4</sup> whom he sent to assume

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> That is, in the volumes of his book which have been published to the world. Certain volumes, it is said, were suppressed.

<sup>3</sup> Later on, after the battles of the Yalu and Nan-shan, he commenced to fortify positions in front of Mukden.

<sup>4</sup> General Sasulitch, properly speaking, commanded the 2nd Siberians. After the battle of the Yalu he went back to the 2nd Siberians; while General Ivanov was appointed to the command of the 3rd.

command on the Yalu, to avoid a decisive engagement with superior forces.

On the 15th April he published instructions to the army as follows: "In the Japanese we shall in any case have very serious opponents, who must be reckoned with according to European standards. It is very important that they should not gain the consciousness of victory in the opening combats, when they will be superior in numbers. This would still further raise their spirits."

As late as the 25th April he again warned General Sasulitch that his duty was merely to delay the enemy and to observe his numbers and organisation, and that he was to avoid an unequal combat with superior numbers, but was to retire slowly, keeping touch with the enemy. He appears to have been unaware that General Sasulitch had received orders from the Viceroy to hold that position and offer a vigorous resistance.

General Kuropatkin states indeed in his book that General Sasulitch afterwards explained his disobedience of orders by the fact that he hoped to defeat the enemy. But General Sasulitch is also reported to have stated that he was not at liberty to retreat.

General Kuropatkin also states definitely that not he, but Admiral Alexiev, the Viceroy, was Commander-in-chief.

We are perhaps justified in concluding that the detachment was retained on the Yalu at the express command of the Viceroy; that if General Kuropatkin desired to withdraw it, he knew it was useless to

suggest it; and that he therefore "acted loyally" to his chief and strengthened the detachment to the utmost in the hope that he would thereby enable it to face the Japanese with some prospect of success. Or it was, of course, possible that the Japanese would fear to attack so powerful a force. Then, again, it was possible that the Japanese would rest content with the occupation of Korea, and would not attempt to assume the offensive into Manchuria. This latter idea was openly expressed by the German Military Attaché at the Viceroy's headquarters at Mukden; and it is possible that his opinion carried considerable weight both with the Viceroy and with General Kuropatkin. One thing is, however, perfectly certain. Admiral Alexiev and General Kuropatkin were at cross purposes, and they were both trying to command the army at one and the same time. A dual control of such a nature will always have fatal results. The Viceroy, who was noted for his resolute and autocratic nature, could not, it would seem, delegate powers to his subordinate, the General; he could not give him a definite task—the defeat of the enemy—and leave the mode of execution to him. The immediate result was—as it always is—that the subordinate, feeling his hands tied, fearing lest something should go wrong, could not trust his own subordinates; and, as we shall now see, General Kuropatkin could by no means leave the control of the Yalu detachment to the General in command of it, but must be eternally endeavouring to command it himself, though he was 130 miles distant.

General Sasulitch had been sent to take command of this detachment as late as the 22nd April. But he was not really in command, for his every action was controlled by headquarters at Liao-yang. Thus he constantly received advice and orders as to the disposition of various units of his force; the troops he should hold in reserve, the troops he should send forward on reconnoissance, the manner in which the reconnoitring detachments should operate against the Japanese. He was not even permitted to decide for himself as to how he should post and feed a battalion on outpost duty; and neither did he venture to move a battery without first obtaining permission from Liao-yang. Two days before he was attacked he was informed that in the opinion of headquarters the action of the Japanese displayed but little energy. And yet, at this very moment, the Japanese army, numbering some 40,000 men, had practically completed its careful preparation for its first battle.

The unfortunate General Sasulitch was, it will be admitted, hardly in a position to fight a battle with much chance of success. Not only had he received conflicting orders from General Kuropatkin and from the Viceroy, so that he was uncertain as to whether he was intended to fight or retreat; not only were his slightest movements controlled from Liao-yang; not only was he—so it is stated—confident of his power to beat the Japanese single-handed;<sup>1</sup> but the

<sup>1</sup> In the absence of the *Russian Official History* of this period, we are still in doubt as to the exact instructions received by General Sasulitch and as to his frame of mind.

information he had received had hopelessly misled him as to the true point of attack.

During the latter half of April there were constant rumours of Japanese transports off Ta-Ku-Shan and near the mouth of the Yalu ; Japanese destroyers had steamed into the estuary of the river and engaged a squadron of cavalry. It was reported that the Japanese knew of fords across the mouth of the river, and that they were concentrating in that direction. It was, moreover, remembered that the Japanese had effected the passage of the river near its mouth against the Chinese in 1894, and it was considered likely that they might attempt to repeat the operation in 1904.

In this connection it is interesting to read the back numbers of the British press ; and doubtless many of these reports were telegraphed by too cunning Russian agents to Russia, and so to Liao-yang, for was not Great Britain the ally of Japan ! There were reported landings at Gensan on the east coast of Korea and in the neighbourhood of Port Arthur ; a large transport fleet had been seen steaming towards Ying-Kou ; and, finally, there were reports that the difficulties of movement and supply in Korea were so great that a Japanese movement to the Yalu could not take place for a month, that is, till about the middle of May. The result of these reports was threefold : to induce the Russians to widely extend their forces on the Yalu, in order to guard every possible point ; to concentrate the reserves behind their right flank, near Antung ; and to lull themselves

into fancied security. So confident were the Russians of the continued inaction of the Japanese that General Rennenkampf's cavalry division, which had been pushed forward to Sai-ma-chi to support the Yalu detachment, was, on the 28th April, according to the *German Official History*, withdrawn to commence its divisional drills. And yet the information which the Russians had received induced them to largely exaggerate the Japanese forces. They believed that the 1st Japanese Army consisted of the Guard, 2nd and 12th Divisions, together with two or three reserve brigades—of the existence of which they had now heard for the first time—numbering between 45,000 to 75,000 men. The Japanese, on the other hand, possessed accurate information of the Russian numbers and positions. The *German Official History* ascribes the Japanese knowledge and the Russian ignorance to the admirable Japanese intelligence system and to the stringent supervision exercised over the Japanese press; whereas “the Russian press frequently blabbed out something worth knowing.” The Russians, moreover, took no pains to conceal their troops.

On the night of the 30th April, 1904, the Russian troops were disposed as follows:—At Antung:  $4\frac{1}{2}$  battalions, with 8 guns and 8 machine guns—approximately 2580 bayonets, with 400 mounted scouts. A small detachment had been pushed out to the right to San-chia-Kou.

At Chiu-lien-Cheng: 6 battalions, with 16 guns—

approximately 4000 infantry, with 400 mounted scouts (with a detachment at Ching-Kou).

At Tien-tzu in reserve: 6 battalions, with 16 guns—approximately 5000 men.

Watching the right flank and the coast-line as far as Ta-Ku-Shan was General Mischenko, with 1100 cavalry, 2400 infantry, and 14 guns.

Watching the left flank from An-ping-ho to Hsiao-pu-hsi-ho was Colonel Trukhin, with 1250 cavalry, 1000 infantry, and 8 guns.

Further to the east was Colonel Madritov, with 2 squadrons and 2 detachments of mounted scouts.

Guarding the line of communication from Antung to Feng-huang-Cheng, and from Ta-Ku-Shan to Hai-Cheng, were 6 companies of infantry, about 1500 men.

Hence it will be seen that the main position, extending from Antung to Ching-Kou, a front of twelve to fourteen miles, was held by about 10,500 men, with another 5000 in reserve. The detachments watching the flanks extended that front to a distance of 100 miles, from Ta-Ku-Shan to beyond Chyangsyong. The Japanese had endeavoured, successfully, by means of constant feints, to induce the Russians to maintain this wide separation.

On the other bank of the river the three Japanese divisions were still concentrated about Wiju—the 12th Division on the right, the Guard in the centre, and the 2nd Division on the left. Careful precautions had been taken to hide the position of the Japanese



troops, screens of trees or *Kao-liang*<sup>1</sup> having been erected to mask points on roads which were exposed to view. The Russians, on the other hand, had made no attempts at concealment; their trenches and troops were in full view. Since the 8th April Japanese scouts, spies, and officers with telescopes had carefully watched the Russians, with the result that, on the 22nd April, the Russian strength was estimated to be 5000 cavalry, 15,000 infantry, and sixty guns. This estimate, it will be seen, was remarkably accurate.

The valley of the Yalu, which separated the hostile forces, was about three to four miles in width at Chiu-lien-Cheng. It "consists of a sandy plain broken up into many islands by the maze-like branches of the Yalu River and its tributary the Ai Ho. The ground in the valley is open, and there is no cover, except behind the patches of low trees and scrub which grow on the islands of Kintei and Oseki, or under the banks of the several channels of the river."<sup>2</sup>

At the confluence of the Yalu and Ai Ho there is a "rocky height, called Tiger Hill, half a mile in length and five hundred feet high."

Since 1894 the channel of the river had changed; fords which existed at that time had disappeared, and the maps which had been prepared proved useless.

<sup>1</sup> *Kao liang* is a type of millet, which grows to a height of 10 to 12 feet.

<sup>2</sup> *British Official History of the Russo-Japanese War*, vol. i. p. 52, by the General Staff.

By the 25th April material for the construction of bridges had been collected by the Japanese; but it was necessary to seize the islands of Kyuri and Kintei before a reconnaissance of the river could be executed. These islands were accordingly seized before dawn on the 26th, with the result that the Russians withdrew their outposts from Tiger Hill to the high ground to the north of it.

In order to distract the Russian attention a small detachment of infantry, co-operating with a naval detachment, made a feint of crossing the river at Yongampo on the 25th and 26th. On the 26th and 27th the Japanese threw a bridge over the branch of the Yalu where the road from Wiju to Chiu-lien-Cheng crosses it. This bridge was not intended for use, but merely to attract the attention and draw the fire of the Russians. Between the 26th and 28th numerous other bridges were constructed (ten in all), one south of Wiju, the remainder north of that place.

At 10 a.m., 28th, General Kuroki issued orders for the attack, which was to be directed against the Russian left from Chiu-lien-Cheng to Ching-Kou. The 12th Division was to cross the Yalu at Suikuchin during the night of the 29th-30th to occupy the high ground enclosed between the Yalu and Ai Ho, with its left on hill 955 and a detachment on hill 630, and to cover the passage of the Yalu by the remainder of the army.

On this same night the howitzers, with the artillery of the 2nd Division, were to occupy positions on Kintei Island.

The 2nd Division was to cross during the night of the 30th April to Kyuri Island, and thence to Chukodai Island, where it was to be in readiness to attack across the Ai Ho by dawn of the 1st May. The Guard was to follow the 2nd Division on the night of the 30th, and connect up the 2nd Division with the 12th.

Though, owing to lack of space, we cannot hope to deal with the battle in any detail, yet, as an example of the thorough preparations made by the Japanese, in this and other battles, we may mention that, unknown to the Russians, the howitzers were carefully entrenched on Kintei Island. Screens of timber and trees were placed in front of the batteries, care being taken that these should not be conspicuous; the ground was watered to keep down dust; platforms, hidden in the trees, as observation stations, were erected on the flanks; observation posts were also established on the hills south of Wiju and connected with the batteries by telephone. These observation posts and batteries were furnished with maps of the Russian position marked off in squares, so that fire could be concentrated on any particular square. These guns were not to open fire until the 1st May unless a specially good target offered or unless it became necessary to reply to Russian guns. So successful were these arrangements that, throughout the battle, the Russians failed to locate the howitzers. The artillery of the 2nd Division was destined to cross the river to Chukodai Island to support its infantry.

## BATTLE OF THE YALU, 1st MAY, 1904.

On the morning of the 29th April the 12th Division commenced its preparations to execute its orders by driving off the Russian detachment from An-ping-ho as a preliminary to the construction of a bridge. This was accomplished practically without opposition; for, on receiving information of the activity of the 12th Division, General Sasulitch ordered the bulk of the Russian detachment to withdraw to cover the road from Chyang-syong to Sai-ma-chi. He evidently apprehended a Japanese advance by this road, by which his enemy might intercept his line of retreat between Feng-huang-Cheng and Liao-yang. His apprehensions were probably due to the movement of the Japanese flank guard from Chyang-syong to Siojo, and, possibly to some extent, to the reports of Japanese landings at Gensan on the eastern coast of Korea. But his attention was also, again on the 29th and 30th, attracted to his right, to the mouth of the Yalu, by demonstrations by the Japanese detachment and flotilla from Yongampo. Transports had, moreover, appeared off the mouth of the river. Thus the Japanese had successfully attracted General Sasulitch's attention to every point except the one point of attack. It is interesting to notice, however, that General Kuropatkin at Liao-yang was not similarly deceived. Being at a distance from the actual scene of hostilities, he was probably able to regard the situation and the information of the enemy with calmer judgment. In any case he counselled

Sasulitch to be in readiness for a serious attack on his left and centre. But he also advised that a careful watch should be kept along the whole front, and he impressed on his subordinate the necessity of not losing touch with the adversary.

Meanwhile General Sasulitch, anxious to know what was occurring behind Tiger Hill, despatched on the 29th a battalion with mounted scouts and two guns across the Ai River to recapture that point. This was successfully accomplished, a Japanese piquet being driven off the hill. The result was some delay in the construction of the Japanese bridges from Kyuri and Oseki Islands. But on the morning of the 30th the Russians, who were observed entrenching Tiger Hill, were forced to retire by the fire of the artillery of the Guard Division, and were finally driven across the Ai Ho about noon by the advance of the 12th Division.

The hill was immediately occupied by a battalion of the Guards, and work at the bridges was now rapidly pushed on. This was practically the only check suffered by the Japanese in their preparations for the battle, and by 5 a.m. on the 1st May the three divisions were in position, the 12th on the right, the Guards in the centre, and the 2nd on the left, along the left bank of the Ai Ho from Salan-Kou to opposite Chiu-lien-Cheng. A reserve of four battalions with the bulk of the cavalry was stationed on Kyuri Island.

As for the Russians, they had made but few alterations in their dispositions. General Sasulitch's

attention was still firmly fixed on his right flank, and, as a consequence, he had still kept the bulk of his reserves north of Antung. One battalion and eight machine guns had, however, been sent to reinforce the left section of the defence from Chiu-lien-Cheng to Ching-Kou, and General Kashtalinski<sup>1</sup> had been despatched to take command of the section, with orders to hold his ground. He had posted two battalions with one battery on the slopes about Pot-tien-tzu and Fang-tai-tung-tai. "Thus a force of little more than seven battalions and sixteen guns was distributed over a front of some six miles, and was about to bear the brunt of the Japanese attack." These sixteen guns had already been severely handled by Japanese artillery fire, for on the morning of the 30th, they, having opened fire, had drawn on themselves the fire of the howitzers and artillery of the 2nd Division, and had been silenced in half an hour. So severe had been this Japanese bombardment, and so severely had the Russian infantry as well as the guns suffered, that General Kashtalinski had reported at 11 p.m. on the 30th that his troops were shaken, and that he expected an assault. He also asked for leave to withdraw to the high ground in rear. But in reply he was told that "the troops were at no point to evacuate the ground occupied"; though that, in the event of bombardment, they might leave outposts in the trenches and retire to take cover,—but not with a view to retreat.

<sup>1</sup> Who commanded a division of the 3rd Siberians.

At 6 a.m. on the 1st the whole of the Japanese artillery opened fire. It was replied to by one Russian battery, which, however, was quickly silenced. The Japanese guns then turned their attention to the Russian infantry. At 7 a.m. the Japanese infantry advanced to the attack. It was necessary to cross the Ai Ho—"a swiftly flowing river whose waters run breast high"—under the Russian rifle fire at a range of 1500 to 2000 paces. The Japanese suffered heavily, the 2nd Division especially, but they gained the right bank of the river, and, by 8.30 or 9 a.m. the Russians had been forced back from their trenches between Chiu-lien-Cheng and Fang-tai-tung-tai. Fortunately for them, the troops of the 12th Japanese Division were exhausted by their long and difficult marches, and the river in front of them was deeper than elsewhere. Hence, by 9 a.m. they had but just reached the heights overlooking the river.

In order to give time for the turning movement of the 12th Division to develop, and in order to give food and rest to the troops of the Guard and 2nd Division, these two latter divisions halted for some hours after capturing the first Russian position. General Kashtalinski was thus able to draw off his troops and establish them in a second position behind the Han-tu-ho-tzu stream.

The troops at Antung had also been ordered to retreat to Tien-tzu at 9.30 a.m., and at 10 a.m. General Sasulitch ordered a general retirement. In order to cover the retreat from Antung—to collect the scattered troops, and to withdraw transport—it was necessary

to gain time, and General Kashtalinski was accordingly ordered to hold his ground and to delay the Japanese advance to the utmost. He was reinforced by two battalions and a battery from the reserve.

But about 11 a.m. reports were received that the Russian battalion at Ching-Kou had been defeated. This information was corroborated by mounted scouts, who further reported that a Japanese infantry regiment with cavalry was advancing from Ching-Kou on Lao-fang-Kou. A company of infantry was posted to check this new Japanese advance, and General Kashtalinski ordered the remainder of his force to retreat on Tien-tzu. The retreat commenced about 1.30 p.m., and it was, apparently, reported almost immediately to General Kuroki. He therefore issued orders for a general advance and pursuit.

Just behind the Russian position, at the village of Ha-ma-tang, the road runs through a deep gorge. General Kashtalinski had posted two battalions on the hill 620 to cover the movement of his troops through this gorge, but a Japanese company of the 12th Division had arrived on the hills east of Ha-ma-tang overlooking the road. Their fire practically barred the road into Ha-ma-tang. They were at once attacked; but for some hours they held on to their position though suffering severely. By 4.40 p.m. they had lost two-thirds of their numbers, and were about to be charged by the Russians, when the arrival of the leading regiment of the 12th Division enabled the Japanese to overcome all opposition in this quarter.



A portion of General Kashtalinski's troops had escaped through the defile before the Japanese barred the outlet; some of the infantry units made their way across the hills to Tien-tzu; but a considerable portion of the force, together with most of the guns, machine guns, and ammunition wagons were surrounded. The Russians fought with the utmost gallantry; and it was only at 5.10 p.m., on the threat of a bayonet charge, that the remnant of them finally surrendered. Their gallant resistance enabled the remainder of General Sasulitch's force to make good its retreat by Feng-huang-Cheng to Lien-shan-Kuan, seventy miles distant. The Japanese made no attempt to pursue, but remained halted for several days in the neighbourhood of Antung collecting transport for the further advance. The cavalry was, however, pushed forward on the track of the Russians; and drove Russian cavalry patrols out of Feng-huang-Cheng on the 6th May. Kuan-tien-Cheng was also occupied on the 7th May by a Japanese detachment which had advanced from Siojo on the Yalu; and, on the 10th May, Feng-huang-Cheng was occupied by the bulk of the 1st Army.

The appearance of Japanese troops at Kuan-tien-Cheng, together with a report from Colonel Madritov, who was watching the upper waters of the Yalu, to the effect that a Japanese force was moving on Chyang-syong, as well as reports received from Chinese spies to the effect that powerful Japanese forces were moving by Sai-ma-chi on Mukden, roused considerable alarm at the Russian headquarters. A

detachment of three battalions and two batteries was hastily dispatched to Lien-shan-Kuan to cover Sasulitch's retreat and to hold the mountain passes in the neighbourhood of Mo-tien-ling; while a detachment of 17 squadrons, 3 battalions, and 14 guns, under General Rennenkampf, was sent to Sai-ma-chi to hold that place and to reconnoitre along the road to Kuan-tien-Cheng. A reconnaissance to the latter place was executed on the 9th and 10th May, Japanese infantry being met with. Colonel Madritov also executed a raid across the Yalu against the Japanese line of communication with 500 mounted men. He reached Anju on the 10th May, but was driven off by the small Japanese garrison. Numerous reconnaissances were executed by General Rennenkampf during May; but it was merely discovered that Ai-yang-Cheng and Feng-huang-Cheng were held by the Japanese.

The Russian losses in the battle of the Yalu have been estimated at 3000 men, of which 600 men, together with 21 guns, 8 machine guns, and 89 ammunition wagons, fell into the hands of the Japanese. The Japanese lost about 1000 men.

But these were the material gains and losses.

How shall we estimate the moral gain and loss? The Japanese sailors had already proved themselves to be more efficient, more scientific, better men all round than their Russian adversaries. But that was no argument that Japanese soldiers would prove better men than Russian soldiers. Now, however, these also had proved themselves. They had beaten

their adversaries in every branch of the science and art of war. They had, in their advance, triumphed over great difficulties; they had brought by far the greater force to this the first battlefield; they had displayed a greater capacity than the Russians for careful and methodical preparation and for the foresight which is the foundation of that preparation; they had displayed greater powers of maintaining secrecy as to their own dispositions, as well as of ascertaining the numbers and dispositions of the enemy; they had completely outwitted the Russians; and, finally, they had displayed greater energy, resolution, and knowledge in the actual fighting than their opponents.

As for the Russians, their magnificent but extravagant optimism, based on trivialities, had collapsed—as it is always doomed to collapse. The “positive disdain” for their adversary had been proved to be quite unfounded. It was they themselves who had been outwitted, out-manceuvred, and out-fought. It is impossible to over-estimate the results of a first trial of strength in war; and we shall find that this Russian defeat materially affected all the later operations of the Russian army. It was not merely that the Russian soldier was less efficient than the Japanese, it was far worse than that. How came it that a small Russian detachment was overwhelmed by numbers? Whose fault was that? Who placed it in that position? It was not so much the Russian soldier who was worse than the Japanese, it was the Russian leaders who were incapable!

These are the thoughts which gradually permeate the rank and file and the subordinate officers, and, above all, the staff, when a detachment is caught and defeated at the very outset of a war.

It is said that General Sasulitch handled his detachment badly ; that, instead of entrenching and holding a long line overlooking the river, he should have merely watched the river line, and, keeping his force concentrated in rear of his line of observation, have manœuvred and struck at the Japanese when a portion of them only were across the river. That is true enough ; the great hope—practically the only hope—of the weaker force is to induce or oblige its enemy to separate and then endeavour to overwhelm a portion ; the “defence of a position” must almost infallibly prove disastrous. But was General Sasulitch at liberty to manœuvre ? Was he not tied down by orders from the Commander-in-chief and the Viceroy ? To ask General Sasulitch to manœuvre his enemy into a false position and then attack him was to ask him to disregard the detailed orders he had received ; that is, to tear to pieces the trammels of “discipline” with which he had been bound from his youth upwards ; or, in other words, to play the part of the genius. But do geniuses ever rise to general’s rank in time of peace ? In any case, the faulty tactics of General Sasulitch cannot absolve from blame those who put his detachment so uselessly into so precarious a position. For the point is that the weaker force is doomed to be beaten unless it is more cleverly handled than its adversary ; but if that

far more powerful adversary is admirably handled—as were the Japanese—then, what hope is there for the weaker force? The great Napoleon, Generals Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and others, have rung the changes on the methods by which the weaker force may hope to overcome the stronger; but they all come back to the same thing—surprise; to induce or oblige the enemy to separate his forces; or to induce the enemy to put himself into a position in which he cannot use his weapons, and then to attack him. Surprise is the essence of all; and surprise is the result of the power to mislead the enemy. This is not a simple affair, if the enemy knows his work.

It is also said that General Sasulitch should not have fought at all, but should have retired the moment the Japanese advanced to attack. That was apparently General Kuropatkin's desire. But, as history shows, to delay a powerful adversary in this manner, without getting caught, is an exceedingly difficult operation; one which is seldom, if ever, executed successfully by raw troops at the outset of a war. The troops and their commanders are too confident, over-estimating their own prowess and efficiency and under-estimating those of the enemy. In this case, also, it is essential to mislead the enemy; and the power to mislead depends primarily on the intelligence organisation, which is a matter of preparation. It was, as we shall see, in this very respect that the Russians were proved wanting.

But this desire to delay the enemy—that is, to gain time—is a principal feature of a defensive

attitude, which, in its turn, is the result of weakness or unreadiness. Indecision in the supreme command is usually the consequence of unreadiness; and hence it is that we so constantly find a detachment pushed forward, the commander of which has received conflicting instructions or, possibly, none at all. The only really definite instructions that General Douay received before Weissembourg were to bake bread; while General Frossard at Spicheren received none at all; except that he was to be "the eye of the army." Sir Penn Symons, again, was sent to Glencoe, apparently at his own request, to defend the coal mines.

The lesson for us would seem to be that a general placed in such a situation should insist upon receiving clear instructions; but that he must expect his request to go unanswered—as it usually does—and he must be prepared, if necessary, to tear up conflicting instructions, to judge of the situation for himself, and act simply for the good of his country. Indecision, or a passively defensive attitude, will certainly prove fatal.

## CHAPTER IV.

### OPERATIONS AT PORT ARTHUR FROM THE ARRIVAL OF ADMIRAL MAKAROV TO THE LANDING OF THE JAPANESE AT PITZU-WO.

ADMIRAL MAKAROV had reached Mukden on the 8th March, where he conferred with the Viceroy, who had established his headquarters at that place at the latter end of February.

On the 9th March Admiral Makarov assumed command of the fleet at Port Arthur, and at once new life was infused into all. That very night a flotilla of destroyers was sent out to scout, and fought a severe action with Japanese destroyers, one Russian vessel being lost. On the 10th March the Japanese fleet appeared, and a portion of it bombarded the fortress by indirect fire from Pigeon Bay, the object being, primarily, to cover the disembarkation of the 1st Army, which was about to take place in Korea. A detachment of workmen from the Baltic Navy Yard had also arrived with Admiral Makarov; and the repair of the damaged ships of war was now pushed forward in earnest. The 'Tzesarevich' was to be repaired by the end of May, and the 'Retvisan' in June. Makarov was everywhere; "he forgot

nothing." He took the fleet out to manœuvre, and a Japanese merchant vessel was captured. An offensive spirit quickly replaced the spirit of mere passive resistance which had taken hold of the Russian fleet ; and when, during the night of the 26th March, the Japanese again endeavoured, but unsuccessfully, to block the mouth of the harbour, and their battleships bombarded the fortress from Pigeon Bay, the Russian squadron put to sea, attempting to draw the Japanese vessels within the zone of fire of the fortress. The Japanese were not, however, to be caught. They retreated, and were followed for a short distance by the Russians. The Russians then re-entered the harbour, having accomplished the whole manœuvre during a single high tide, whereas formerly they had required two tides, or twenty-four hours, merely to leave the harbour. This feat, together with the retreat of the Japanese, raised the Russian morale in an extraordinary degree. "The feeling amongst the crews was as if we had scored a victory. We certainly had not beaten the Japanese, but we had overcome our own slackness and want of enterprise."<sup>1</sup>

For two weeks the Japanese gave no sign of life, and the Russians took measures to reply to a bombardment from Pigeon Bay and to block and mine the entrance of the harbour, so that, while the Russian fleet could obtain egress, ingress would be denied to the Japanese blocking vessels. But on the night of the 12th-13th April—a night of drizzling rain—some vessels were sighted "pottering about" some two

<sup>1</sup> "Rasplata."



miles off. Fire was not opened, as these might prove to be the Russian destroyer flotilla, which was at sea, scouting. It was, however, recognised that they might also be hostile vessels laying mines; but this anticipation was forgotten in the excitement of next day.

In the early morning the Russian destroyer flotilla returned, but one vessel was missing. Almost immediately firing commenced at sea; it was probably the missing destroyer being attacked, and a Russian cruiser was despatched in haste to its assistance. True enough, the destroyer had been sunk; and the cruiser only arrived in time to drive off the hostile destroyers and pick up the survivors of the crew of the ill-fated vessel. But now the Japanese cruisers, 'the Greyhounds,' appeared. Upon that the Russian cruiser was reinforced by others, and then the battleships steamed out. But the Japanese Greyhounds had also been reinforced by two armoured cruisers, and these steamed forward to meet the Russians, though the latter were the stronger force. A long-range action, at 10,000 yards, ensued, the Japanese slowly retreating. But not for long, for, being joined by their battleships, they again approached the Russian fleet. The Japanese were now in far superior strength, while the Russians were fifteen miles distant from Port Arthur. The Russians retreated; the Japanese pursued, coming up fast. But when the Russians entered the fire zone of the fortress the Japanese relinquished the pursuit, and turned as if to make for Pigeon Bay. Now Pigeon

Bay was the spot from which they could bombard Port Arthur without coming within range of the guns of the fortress. And during these bombardments the Russian fleet had formed the habit of manœuvring in a certain area, and it was in this very area that certain "suspicious shadows" had been seen during the previous night. These shadows had been forgotten.

Of a sudden there occurred two tremendous explosions, and the flagship, the 'Petrovavlosk,' with Admiral Makarov on board, went down amidst a turmoil of smoke, steam, and flame.

There was no panic in the fleet. It headed for Port Arthur. But another explosion, and another battleship, the 'Pobyeda,' heeled slowly over. Then a panic ensued, and the ships opened fire in all directions.

"Mingled with the thunder of the guns came cries such as: 'It's all up with us!'—'Fire, fire!'—'Save yourselves!' The men had completely lost their heads."<sup>1</sup>

Order was quickly restored, and the fleet returned into port. But the Russian spirit was broken. It was not the loss of the battleships, though now they had but three left of the original seven; it was the death of Admiral Makarov. "We have lost our

<sup>1</sup>"Rasplata." It is interesting to note that in the press there had been much talk of the submarines which the Japanese were reported to have secretly constructed. Perhaps the Russian sailors in Port Arthur had heard these rumours. There were also rumours that the Russians had conveyed submarines overland to Port Arthur; and when later, Japanese ships of war were sunk by mines, the Japanese also were at first inclined to ascribe their misfortunes to submarines.

Head," they said. He was the only man in whom they put faith, and he could not be replaced.

On the 14th April, the day following, it was announced that Admiral Alexiev would assume command of the fleet pending the arrival of a new Commander, and on the 15th he arrived at Port Arthur. Then, according to Commander Semenoff, matters reverted to their condition before the arrival of Makarov; the "most obedient servants" once more raised their heads and ruled the roost. The display of initiative and originality which Makarov had so carefully fostered during his short tenure of command was again suppressed, and, once again, nobody dared to act without orders. And as no orders to act were issued the fleet quickly reverted to its purely passive attitude. The maxim, "Be careful, and risk nothing" was again in force; the new flagship—the old one having been cleared of all unnecessary woodwork with a view to battle during Makarov's regime—was now fitted up with cabins, partitions, bulkheads, wall-paper, and furniture, as a residence for the Viceroy and his staff. The flagship was evidently no longer intended for use.

On the night of the 2nd–3rd May the Japanese made another attempt to block the mouth of the harbour. The attempt was made with seven vessels on this occasion. Commander Semenoff states that the gallantry of the crews of these vessels was "simply fabulous"; but they failed, owing, apparently, to the careful precautions which had been adopted by Admiral Makarov before his death. The

Japanese, however, believed that they had succeeded. A few men only of the crews of these vessels managed to escape in boats; some men were picked up on the following day by the Russians; but most of them were killed by projectiles or explosives or drowned; some of those who reached land refused to surrender, but continued fighting till killed.

On the 3rd May the "first confused but ominous rumours" of the battle of the Yalu reached the Port Arthur garrison. Was it really true, they asked, that the Russians had lost 2000 men and twenty guns? "Our guns in their hands? How could this be possible?"

On the 5th May, by order of the Czar, the Viceroy suddenly left Port Arthur in a special train for Mukden, leaving the command of the squadron to Admiral Vitgeft, the command of the Kuan-tung Peninsula to General Stessel, and the command of the fortress to General Smirnov.

The reason for the sudden departure of the Viceroy was the disembarkation of Japanese troops at Pi-tzu-wo. The last attempt of the Japanese to block Port Arthur was undertaken to prevent all possibility of interference by the Russian fleet with the landing. It had been commonly known in Port Arthur as early as the 28th April that the Japanese were preparing to land at Pi-tzu-wo; they had landed in that same neighbourhood in the war with China in 1894; and they were now placing booms and mines across the passages between the Elliot Islands as a protection for their transports against torpedo attack.

Thus this Japanese disembarkation did not come as a surprise to the troops in Port Arthur. But that was hardly the case with the Viceroy or General Kuropatkin and the Headquarters Staff. These had received conflicting information which pointed to landings in the neighbourhood of Ying-Kou and of Kaiping, of Antung and of Ta-Ku-Shan, as well as of Pi-tzu-wo. It was impossible to say for certain which of these was the true point of landing and which merely feints to distract attention. Thus a fleet of transports was known to be in the neighbourhood of Antung and Ta-Ku-Shan ;<sup>1</sup> and as, after the battle of the Yalu, the Russian cavalry had instinctively withdrawn from the coast-line about Ta-Ku-Shan, there was no means of ascertaining whether the Japanese were, or were not, landing at that place. As a matter of fact, information was received that a landing had already commenced. But then, again, information had been received that a landing was to take place at Ying-Kou, and the Russians were engaged in making preparations to resist it. Then, on the 25th April, the Russian cruisers from Vladivostok had destroyed a Japanese transport with troops on board in the neighbourhood of Gensan, and shortly after that date a squadron of Japanese war vessels had appeared off Vladivostok.

<sup>1</sup>This was probably the transport fleet of eighty vessels conveying the 2nd Army. This fleet anchored at Chinampo to await the result of the attempt to block Port Arthur on the night of the 2nd-3rd May. Admiral Togo reported that he had been successful, upon which the transport fleet sailed for Pi-tzu-wo.

Commander Semenoff points out that the Japanese were masters in the art of maintaining secrecy ; and he compares them in this respect with the Russians. As for the latter, nothing could be kept secret ; the words "secret," "most secret," "confidential," had been so commonly employed in peace time that they had lost all significance. It was sufficient to mark a document as secret to ensure that everybody should commence to talk about it.

But with the Japanese it was very different. Not only could they keep secret their designs, but even their losses were not divulged. Thus the battleship 'Yashima' struck a mine on the 15th May ; but that this ship had been lost was not definitely known to the world until after the Battle of Tsushima at the end of the war. But more than that, they would not even permit the news of victories to be published to the world, unless it was to their advantage that it should be known. A case was reported in the British press of the editor of a Japanese newspaper who was arrested and tried for divulging information to the enemy ; he had, without authority, reported a victory ! This was one of the methods by which the Japanese maintained secrecy. But they appear to have recognised that it is almost hopeless to prevent the leakage of information if the adversary's intelligence system is efficient ; and that it is not sufficient to seek merely to prevent such leakage ; it is necessary also that, if the enemy obtains true information, he should at the same time obtain such

a mass of false that he will be unable to distinguish between true and untrue.

The capacity displayed by a nation to circulate false information in time of war is sure evidence of the efficiency of its preparation for war. For a most carefully organised intelligence system is necessary for the purpose; it is not sufficient that the enemy should read false information in the neutral press; he will not believe it—unless his spies also corroborate it. As we shall see, the Russians continually throughout this war received false information which materially influenced their strategy, while the Japanese managed to obtain accurate information. That the Russians were quite unprepared for war in respect of intelligence appears to be beyond doubt. Commander Semenoff states that he was called on to examine prisoners in that he had once—six years before—studied Chinese and Japanese for a year. He also asserts that in the “whole enormous staff” at Port Arthur “there was not one person who was a thorough master of the Japanese language and characters.” The Japanese, on the other hand, had been careful to train large numbers of men in the study of the Russian language.

It will be seen that the Russians were reduced to a species of divination if they desired to fathom the intentions of the Japanese, and thereby to locate the places at which they would land. Would they land at Ta-Ku-Shan? Highly probable; for in so doing their landing would be covered by their army, which had just won a victory on the Yalu. But, on

the other hand, a landing at that place would not enable them to isolate Port Arthur or to utilise the railway. A landing at Pi-tzu-wo would enable them to do both ; but, on the other hand, it was a more dangerous proceeding ; for the Japanese transports might be attacked by the Russian fleet ; or the Japanese army might be attacked by Russian troops when only half its force was ashore. Further, a landing at Ying-Kou would enable the Japanese not only to isolate Port Arthur and to utilise the railway, but to seize a harbour. By a landing at this place, moreover, the Japanese overland communications would be materially shortened. But, on the other hand, any force landing at this place would be separated by a great distance and by a practically impassable country without lateral roads from the Japanese Yalu army ; and it would, consequently, be liable to be attacked by the whole Russian army. The transport fleet conveying the troops and, thereafter, the transports conveying supplies for this army, must also pass in close proximity to Port Arthur and the Russian fleet.

At which of these places would the Japanese land ? We may be sure that General Kuropatkin gave considerable thought to the subject ; but the result seems to have been that the Russians expected a Japanese landing at Ying-Kou and Ta-Ku-Shan, and regarded the Japanese preparations off Pi-tzu-wo as a mere feint to distract attention. They accordingly made preparations to resist the landing at Ying-Kou, though a careful watch was also kept on the shore at Pi-tzu-wo.



Now the Russians had fully recognised earlier that the Japanese might land at Pi-tzu-wo and isolate Port Arthur by seizing the narrow isthmus at Nanshan. They had, accordingly, when the Russian fleet suffered its first reverse, occupied this isthmus and fortified it. By this time, at the commencement of May, this isthmus had been strongly fortified; heavy guns had been mounted, and obstacles had been constructed in front of the trenches. It was really essential for the Russians to hold this isthmus; for if the Japanese gained possession of it, the fine port of Dalny, with its wharfs, docks, and railway, would also fall into their hands.

But the Russian supreme leadership had been surprised—surprised by the sudden outbreak of hostilities, surprised by the defeat of the invincible Russian fleet, surprised by the defeat of the invincible Yalu detachment. The most pessimistic Russian had never brought himself to believe in the possibility of the defeat of the Russians on land—on the sea, yes, possibly, it was not their element; but on land—by the Japanese——!

When troops are surprised in their bivouacs it is bad for those troops—the rest of the army laughs at them, and they burn with shame. But when the Commander-in-chief of an army is surprised, it is bad for the whole army; it is also bad for him. The army is apt to lose confidence in him, and his nerve is apt to be shaken. For a certain period of time—measurable by the force of the individual character of the man—he loses the power to think clearly, calmly, and judiciously.

It seems probable that both Admiral Alexiev and General Kuropatkin, certainly the former, had lost, temporarily, the power to think clearly and calculate calmly. Besides, they were at cross purposes.

General Kuropatkin proposed to leave Port Arthur to stand alone. It was a fortress; it was fortified, garrisoned, and provisioned—what more could it want? Of what use is a fortress which cannot stand alone? It has been specially constructed with that one purpose in view—for the purpose of denying a certain locality to the enemy for a certain period of time. If it cannot fulfil its purpose it is useless—worse than useless, indeed, for instead of being the servant, it becomes the master, and the strategy of the field army must be modified to guarantee its security. As will be remembered, General Kuropatkin had feared that if Port Arthur were weakly garrisoned it might become his master, and he had therefore urged that the garrison should be increased. Now he wished to put into execution his original plan, to avoid the defeat of detachments, and to delay the enemy while gradually withdrawing, if necessary back to Harbin. By the defeat on the Yalu he had already had one detachment beaten. He, apparently, wished to avoid such another defeat at all costs. Hence, at the commencement of May, when Japanese troops appeared at Feng-huang-Cheng, and when rumours were rife of Japanese landings at Ta-Ku-Shan, Pi-tzu-wo, and Kaiping, he commenced to consider the advisability of preparing to withdraw from Liao-yang. He had had fortifications constructed at Liao-yang

and further south, at the Fen-shui-ling passes, also at Mukden and Tieh-ling. But he by no means proposed to fight pitched battles in these fortified positions; he intended to utilise them merely as a means of delaying and exhausting the enemy. And, in the meantime, it was necessary to evacuate a part of the stores from Liao-yang, leaving nothing but fighting troops with their actual requirements in the shape of supplies, ammunition, transport, etc., and it was necessary to withdraw the detachments between Kaiping and Nan-shan. There was a Russian detachment at Telissu and at Pu-lan-tien; and when, on the 4th May, 10,000 Japanese were reported to have landed at Pi-tzu-wo, it was ordered to withdraw by rail to Liao-yang on the 6th; for there was the danger that it might be overwhelmed by the Japanese forces landing at Pi-tzu-wo, or cut off if they landed at Kaiping or Ying-Kou. If the Japanese ventured to land at Ying-Kou, he might find an opportunity for a blow at them. But it would depend on the position and strength of the other Japanese army from the Yalu. If that army were strong and energetic it might strike his left flank and line of communication at Liao-yang when the bulk of his force was engaged at Ying-Kou. That was a danger to be guarded against at all costs; for it would mean a decisive battle before the Russians were ready—the one thing of all others that the Japanese would naturally desire. And his one line of communication, a single railway line—if the Japanese seized that behind him, his army was ruined, it must surrender,

and then good-bye to all hopes of ultimate victory ; for the Japanese might even reach Harbin and cut off Vladivostok before sufficient troops could be brought from Russia to oppose them. If, on the other hand, he was able to execute his project—to delay the Japanese while avoiding defeat in detail, to slowly retire, to improve the Siberian Railway, to gradually strengthen his army, then, in six months or a year, perhaps, he would be able to assume the offensive with overwhelming forces, driving the Japanese back through Manchuria, back through Korea, back into their own islands, and, ultimately, invade those islands.

A perfectly logical scheme, was it not ? It turned on this : Was Port Arthur able to hold out for the required period ? Would the Russian rulers and the Russian people brook these delays ? would they brook the idea of a Russian fortress besieged without an attempt to relieve it ? They must brook it, or they must brook something worse. Quite so. But “the best laid schemes o’ mice and men gang aft agley”—especially when there is a Viceroy who is also Commander-in-chief, and when a beleaguered fortress enters into the question.

Admiral Alexiev arrived at Liao-yang on the 6th May. Before the outbreak of hostilities none so confident as he that Port Arthur was safe in all eventualities. But in the very teeth of his “fleet in being” the Japanese had landed troops in north-western Korea ; and now they were reported to be about to land wherever they chose, even within about seventy miles of Port Arthur.

His theory of the fleet in being was evidently a false one. As early as the 25th April the chief of his staff telegraphed from Port Arthur to General Kuropatkin stating that the Viceroy "considered it essential that if the fortress were attacked, the field army should support it as energetically and rapidly as possible." On May 16th, when the news of the landing of the Japanese at Pi-tzu-wo had been definitely confirmed, the Viceroy questioned whether the place "would be able to hold out for more than two or three months, in spite of all the steps taken to strengthen the defences."<sup>1</sup> It appears that the fortress had been provisioned for a garrison of twelve battalions for a period of one year; and that, as that garrison had been increased to twenty-seven battalions, it could not now hold out for more than six months.<sup>2</sup>

General Stessel evidently regarded the situation of the fortress as serious; for at this time he appealed continuously for the assistance of the field army.

If the Russian field army was to "support the fortress energetically and rapidly" it must evidently not only not retreat beyond Liao-yang, but must be prepared to advance south to attack the Japanese.

Here was the fortress already, before the siege had even commenced, usurping the functions of the master instead of the servant of strategy.

In the meantime, on the 5th May, the disembarkation of the 2nd Japanese Army had commenced

<sup>1</sup>*The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. ii. p. 213. Compare with his reply to General Kuropatkin's telegram of the 24th February (p. 106).

<sup>2</sup>*Conférences*, vol. i. app. 3.

near Pi-tzu-wo, between the Ta-sha and Li-lan Rivers. A few Russian scouts were to be seen on a low hill which overlooks the landing-place; but a few shells from the Japanese cruisers drove them off. A covering force of 100 bluejackets were then put ashore, wading waist deep some 1200 yards. These occupied the hill and raised the Japanese standard. The troops immediately commenced to disembark. They also must wade waist deep a distance of 1200 yards. On the 6th it came on to blow, and the disembarkation had to be suspended. General Oku, who commanded the 2nd Army, being concerned lest the troops already ashore should be attacked, selected a more sheltered spot a few miles to the southward and continued the disembarkation in spite of the weather.

The Japanese fleet had taken the most careful precautions to avert the possibility of interference with their disembarkation by the Russian fleet. The passages between the various islands of the Elliot group had been blocked by booms and mine-fields; the fairway between the islands and the mainland was completely blocked against hostile torpedo craft. The transports had anchored in shallow water so that if a vessel was sunk, its upper works would still be above water. Finally, the whole Japanese fleet was in readiness to attack the Russian fleet if it managed to come out of the harbour.

The first troops to land had despatched a small force to cut the railway at Pu-lan-tien. It consisted of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  battalions and 3 squads of pioneers. It started

at 7 p.m. on the 5th, arrived at its destination at 8 p.m. on the 6th, drove off some Russians, cut the railway, and returned to the landing-place on the 7th, some fifty miles in forty-eight hours by the worst of roads. On the 7th another detachment was despatched to cut the railway some distance south of Pu-lan-tien; it also accomplished its task successfully, and returned.

On the morning of the 10th, Russian cavalry appeared in front of the troops holding the covering position, but made no attempt to interfere with the landing.

By the 13th the bulk of the 2nd Army had landed. It consisted of the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Divisions with the 1st Artillery Brigade. Each division consisted of 12 battalions of infantry, 1 regiment (3 squadrons) of cavalry, 36 guns, and 1 battalion (3 companies) of engineers.

The 1st Artillery Brigade consisted of 3 regiments of artillery, or 108 guns.

Thus between the 5th and 13th May a Japanese army numbering about 35,000 men<sup>1</sup> had landed within seventy miles of the Russian fleet in Port Arthur. It had been conveyed in eighty transports, which, when moored in line, occupied eighteen miles of water. And yet the Russian fleet made no attempt to interrupt the disembarkation or to strike a blow at this force which, for the time being, was helpless. Could a single cruiser or destroyer get in amongst

<sup>1</sup>The whole army numbered some 40,000 men, but the landing was not complete by the 13th.

these merchant vessels either in the open sea or while the disembarkation was in progress, there was a fair prospect that a panic would ensue; ships might foul or collide in their efforts to escape, or they might run aground—at least, they might scatter! None could foresee the results of such a panic; it would, perhaps, delay the disembarkation for some weeks; it might amount to a great victory for the Russians. Here, surely, was a case in which the advantages to be gained were more than worth the risks to be run.

This was the view adopted by the subordinate ranks of the Russian fleet; and we read in “*Ras-plata*” that, as day followed day and nothing was attempted, though the Japanese were known to be landing, “suppressed indignation prevailed throughout the squadron, and grew from day to day.”

“As a matter of fact,” Commander Semenov continues, “we still had available three undamaged battleships, one armoured, three first class, and one second class protected cruisers, four gunboats, and over twenty destroyers. With this force we could unquestionably have undertaken something, against the disembarkation which was taking place only 60 miles from us.”

Had any one of the subordinate officers of this fleet been in command at Port Arthur there is no question but he would have taken the fleet to sea—and it would have been destroyed! Probably; for the whole Japanese fleet was concentrated between Port Arthur and the landing-place in readiness to



meet this very attempt on the part of the Russians. Nevertheless, in spite of all the Japanese precautions—and they were very thorough—one or two Russian ships of war might have got through, especially in view of the morning mist, and of the fact that the Japanese believed that they had successfully sealed up Port Arthur on the last attempt of the 2nd–3rd May. If Admiral Makarov had still been in the land of the living, unquestionably the attempt would have been made.

Let us glance at the point of view of the Russian leaders in Port Arthur. “So as to calm the general excitement,” Commander Semenoff writes, “the ‘higher circles’ started the rumour that our inactivity was part of General Kuropatkin’s plan of operations. It was even said that the General had asked the Viceroy not to interfere with the landing of the Japanese to the eastward of Port Arthur, as he feared a landing at Ying-Kou. Of course, no one could doubt our being victorious on land.” . . . “It was maintained that it would be better not to risk our ships just now. The squadron must be saved up for the moment when the Japanese were not to be allowed to return. The well-known maxim of ‘be careful and risk nothing’ somewhat discredited these rumours. Still, no other explanation was forthcoming.”<sup>1</sup>

Commander Semenoff appears to be right in discrediting these rumours, for General Kuropatkin gives no hint in his book that he desired the fleet

<sup>1</sup> “Rasplata.”

to remain inactive. Quite the reverse, indeed, for he writes: "As I have already pointed out, our fleet scarcely assisted the army at all; for while taking shelter in Port Arthur, it did not attempt to prevent the enemy's disembarkation. Three Japanese armies—those of Oku, Nodzu, and Nogi—landed unhindered on the Liao-tung peninsula; the forces of Oku and Nogi actually landed close to where our squadron was lying."<sup>1</sup>

According to Commander Semenoff the inactivity of the Russian fleet was due solely to Admiral Alexiev, the Viceroy. He had stamped out initiative, and thereby destroyed all offensive spirit. The one is the corollary of the other. He had converted the flagship into a drawing-room—giving an example of passivity; for a ship fitted up as a drawing-room is evidently not intended to fight. Before leaving Port Arthur he "prescribed the programme of our future activity," by which Commander Semenoff means that he laid down that the fleet was to remain inactive. Before leaving Port Arthur the Viceroy had interviewed the commanders of the two destroyer flotillas, had urged them to attempt something to interfere with the Japanese landing, and had finally directed them to "talk it over with Admiral Vitgeft."<sup>2</sup>

On the 6th May the Viceroy telegraphed to Admiral Vitgeft: "Destroyer attacks against the enemy's

<sup>1</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. i. p. 236. General Nodzu afterwards assumed command of the 4th Army, which landed at Ta-Ku-Shan; while General Nogi commanded the besieging army.

<sup>2</sup> *British Off. Hist., Naval and Military.*

transports very desirable, and very important for the defence of the fortress. The enemy's transports are all now within the radius of action of our destroyers."<sup>1</sup> Admiral Vitgeft thereupon convened a Council of War which decided that in view of the weakness of the Russian fleet any such enterprise must mean annihilation, in which case the Baltic fleet on its arrival would receive no support from Port Arthur. Further, that a sortie by destroyers alone was doomed to failure and was objectless. This conclusion was telegraphed to the Viceroy.

According to Commander Semenoff, however, this Council of War was merely a matter of form; and it arrived at the decision at which it was required to arrive. "The minutes," he writes, "commenced with a statement to the effect that the Squadron was momentarily in such a situation that active enterprise had no chance of success. On these grounds, therefore, all its means must be utilised for the defence of Port Arthur until better times came round again." This decision was known in the fleet as the "Great Edict of Renunciation by the Navy." Many guns were now withdrawn from the ships of war for the land defences. Thereafter, the navy despaired. There was to be one more flicker to show that life still existed.

"But why," asked Commander Semenoff of a member of the Council, "does it not appear any-

<sup>1</sup> "Rasplata." The *British Official History* does not, unfortunately, quote the text of this telegram, though it mentions that the telegram was sent. The volume of the *Russian Official History* dealing with this period has not yet been published.

where that all this was simply *ordered* by the Viceroy? Why this comedy of the Council of War? On these minutes of the proceedings, the most important signature, the Viceroy's, is missing; his name is not even mentioned. Such as it now stands this paper will in the end be your 'charge sheet.'"

Commander Semenoff practically maintains that the Viceroy, rendered nervous for his own prospects by the defeats of the Russians, was now endeavouring to cover himself and to thrust the responsibility on to the shoulders of subordinates.

It will be seen that the Viceroy's telegram was more of a suggestion than a definite order; yet the Viceroy, who had but just left the spot and could grasp the situation at first hand, was the only man able to judge whether or no the Russian fleet should risk annihilation in the attempt to interfere with the Japanese disembarkation. He, moreover, was the only man able to judge whether it was wise to despatch the Russian fleet to certain annihilation, with the one idea of destroying a certain number of the Japanese ships of war, and so facilitating the task of the Baltic fleet on its arrival. Yet there seems to be no doubt that he left Port Arthur without giving a definite decision, but left the decision of these momentous questions to a subordinate.

It has been necessary to enter into this question inasmuch as the Viceroy was Commander-in-chief of all the armed forces in the Far East; and the personality, capacity, and knowledge of the Commander-in-chief is all important—"In war, one

man is everything; the rest are nothing." If, then, Commander Semenoff's assertions are true,<sup>1</sup> we need seek no further for the reason of the Russian defeats both by sea and land. The Japanese describe Admiral Alexiev as a man of great talent, but, as a strategist and diplomat, of unknown value. He is also described as "the inflexible Admiral Alexiev." Of his inflexibility there is no doubt, of his talent there is no doubt, of his resolution there is no doubt. But, according to Commander Semenoff, there is reason to doubt whether he possessed that moral courage—to bear the responsibility for a great decision in time of peril—which is so essential in a leader. We have already found reason to doubt his knowledge of strategy. When knowledge is lacking, the virtues of inflexibility and resolution are apt to become a curse rather than a blessing, for they take a false direction. Thus Alexiev's inflexibility was, according to Commander Semenoff, directed to the suppression of originality and initiative, and, therefore, of the offensive spirit. When knowledge is deficient, talent also is apt to become a curse rather than a blessing; for it gives birth to vanity, and vanity in a leader, unless he be a genius, is usually a sure precursor of defeat.

An interesting point in this connection to the student of war, is that, so often, the subordinate

<sup>1</sup>Commander Semenoff appears to have "kicked over the traces" in sheer disgust and mortification that the service of which he was so proud and to which he had devoted his life should have played so poor a part. In such circumstances a man may be relied on to blurt out the truth, so far as he knows it.

ranks of an armed force see easily and clearly the one necessary, vigorous, and bold course that must, at all costs, be adopted; whereas the leaders see only its boldness, and cannot see its necessity. Is it, as the juniors affirm, that with increasing age there comes a loss of courage? Or is it, as the seniors assert, that with responsibility there comes caution? Or is it a little bit of both? Or is it that the juniors "know nothing, and therefore fear nothing"? Or is it that youth, like Napoleon, sees but one thing—the essential; while the seniors, like the generals of whom Napoleon spoke, seeing too many things at once, lose sight of the essential?

There is one fact which stands out in the history of war. The old man of vast knowledge and experience is often magnificent as a leader, when the force he controls is perfect; but an emergency, when the weapon must be both fashioned and wielded simultaneously, seems to require the genius, energy, and daring of youth.

That appears to have been the case with the Russians. A young man wielding the inefficient weapon, the Russian fleet, might still, by his energy and daring, have wrested victory from the hands of the old, experienced, and very wise Japanese leaders.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE BATTLE OF NAN-SHAN AND THE ISOLATION OF PORT ARTHUR.<sup>1</sup>

GENERAL OKU, commanding the 2nd Japanese Army, had received instructions to land on the Liao-tung Peninsula, when opportunity offered, to occupy the line Ta-sha River—Pu-lan-tien on the north, and the line Chin-Chou—Dalny on the south, and so form a base of operations from which to attack the enemy in co-operation with the 1st Army.

Let us notice, at the very outset, the breadth of these instructions. General Oku was told merely what was required of him, but the method by which he should execute his instructions was left entirely to his own decision. There was none of the petty interference to which General Sasulitch had been subjected.

On the 13th May, when the bulk of the 2nd Army had disembarked, the information at the disposal of the Japanese was as follows: There was a brigade of Russian infantry at Chin-Chou, with detachments at Nan-shan, Shih-san-li-tai and Liu-chia-kao. At Dalny and Talienwan, there were forces of Russians,

<sup>1</sup>The *Russian Official History* of this period has not yet been published.

strength unknown. The isthmus at Nan-shan was known to have been fortified. There were petty detachments at Pu-lan-tien and Wa-fang-tien, and one army corps behind these at Ying-Kou and Kaiping.

General Oku's instructions involved the capture of Dalny, and, therefore, of Nan-shan ; and the danger existed that, while he was employed in this direction, he might be attacked from the northward. Time was, therefore, of importance ; and it was also essential to "amuse"—to use Napoleon's expression—the Russians at Kaiping, and so prevent their movement south. General Oku therefore decided to commence his operations on the 15th without waiting for the 5th Division and the 1st Cavalry Brigade, which were expected to arrive shortly. On the 15th, accordingly, the 3rd and 4th Divisions moved out, and occupied a line from Pu-lan-tien to the ferry over the Ta-sha River (where the road from Pi-tzu-wo to Chin-Chou crosses the river).

The 1st Division was ordered to advance south towards Chin-Chou. A reserve of five battalions of the 3rd and 4th Divisions, and the 1st Artillery Brigade was kept near the place of disembarkation.

On the evening of the 14th, however, information was received that the Russian brigade at Chin-Chou had been reinforced from Port Arthur to a strength of one division, while it was found that the Russian detachments to the north were retreating, and that there was therefore no immediate danger to be apprehended from that quarter.



General Oku now decided to move the bulk of the 4th Division,<sup>1</sup> together with a portion of the 1st Artillery Brigade, to the south to reinforce the 1st Division, and with these to strike at the Russians at Chin-Chou. He also arranged for co-operation by the navy. Ships of war were to bombard the coast between Kaiping and Ying-Kou on the 15th and 16th to attract the enemy's attention;<sup>2</sup> and, on the 17th, they were to co-operate in the attack on Nan-shan from Chin-Chou and Talien Bays. In the meantime the 1st and 4th Divisions were to occupy the hills north and north-east of Chin-Chou, and to attack the Russians on the 17th.

On the 15th the 1st Cavalry Brigade and 5th Division commenced to disembark. On the 16th the 1st Division, moving in two columns, one by the road Pi-tzu-wo—Chin-Chou, the other by the eastern coast roads, gained touch with the Russians, who were posted on the hills some five to six miles north-east of Chin-Chou. The Russians slowly withdrew when the Japanese advanced guards came into action against them, but again showed front further back. They again retreated, however, and by 3 p.m. the Japanese had gained possession of Shih-san-li-tai and the heights of Mount Sampson. During this action the 4th Division had only been able to reach

<sup>1</sup> One brigade was left behind with the 3rd Division.

<sup>2</sup> This demonstration had the desired effect, for General Kuropatkin wrote on the 17th May to General Stessel as follows: "We are expecting the disembarkation of the Third Army on the coast between Kai-ping and Newchuang" (*British Official History, Naval and Military*, pp. 155, 156).

a point on the railway some three to four miles north of Shih-san-li-tai.

General Oku, feeling certain that the isthmus at Nan-shan would be strongly held, now decided to halt on the line the troops had reached, to reconnoitre the enemy, to await the disembarkation of the 5th Division, with it to replace the 3rd Division, and to bring up the latter for the blow he intended to deliver.

The Russians had retreated on Chin-Chou. They had had four to five battalions with eight to twelve guns engaged. This force had been ordered out by the Commandant of the Peninsula to clear the line for the passage of a train-load of sick and civilians. It had accomplished its purpose, and delayed the Japanese admirably.

On the following days reconnaissances of the Russians at Chin-Chou and Nan-shan were executed. As a result the Japanese ascertained that Chin-Chou was held by a few infantry and cavalry only. Nan-shan was strongly held and fortified, and further entrenchments were being hastily constructed. There were emplacements for ten batteries on the hill; heavy guns had also been mounted. The hill commanded the whole valley as far as Mount Sampson. About two miles behind Nan-shan (*i.e.* to the south of it) there was a high ridge from which the Russians could bring artillery fire to sweep the flanks of Nan-shan hill.

On the other hand, there were no positions for the Japanese field artillery; and the guns must come

into action in the low ground, and in the open. The Japanese had no heavy artillery. Unless the navy could co-operate from the bays on either flank of the position, the attack must be purely frontal. But these bays were believed to be sown with mines, and it would take a long time to clear them. The possession of Nan-shan was, moreover, necessary before serious attempts could be made to clear these mine-fields. Hence there was nothing for it but a frontal attack, with such assistance as the navy could manage to give. The idea of relinquishing the attempt to "carry" this "impregnable" position never entered into the heads of the Japanese leaders or men.

BATTLE OF NAN-SHAN, 26th MAY, 1904.

By the 23rd May the preliminary dispositions for the attack on Chin-Chou and Nan-shan had been completed. The bulk of the 5th Division was ashore and had replaced the 3rd Division on the line Ta-sha River—Pu-lan-tien. The 4th Division, west of the railway line, was a few miles north of Chin-Chou; the 1st Division was in the centre; the 3rd Division was on the left about Mount Sampson.

General Oku's intention was to attack on the 25th. The divisions received orders to be in readiness to attack by daylight, at which time Chin-Chou was to be assaulted.

The scheme broke through, however, as, owing to bad weather, the co-operation of the navy could not take place. The attack on Chin-Chou was, nevertheless, delivered in half-hearted fashion, and failed.

General Oku now decided to defer the attack until the following day, and then to attack with or without the assistance of the navy. Chin-Chou was now to be captured during the night by the 4th Division, and the whole force was to be deployed by daylight in readiness to commence the attack on Nan-shan.

The assault on Chin-Chou by the 4th Division before dawn on the 26th again failed. The town, in the shape of a square, was enclosed by a high wall with gates in each side of it. The 1st Division, however, becoming aware of the failure of the 4th Division, promptly despatched two battalions to assault the eastern gate. This assault was successful, the greater portion of the garrison, which had consisted of one and a half companies of infantry with some field guns, being captured.

At about 5.20 a.m. on the 26th, when the mist had cleared off, the Japanese guns opened fire. They were replied to by over fifty Russian guns. At 6 a.m. a Japanese flotilla<sup>1</sup> entered Chin-Chou Bay, which, it was found, the Russians had neglected to mine, and opened with their heavy guns. In about an hour's time the Russian fire slackened.

In the meanwhile the infantry had advanced to the attack, the troops of the 4th Division moving along the sands, which were left bare by the receding tide. Now the Russian position was situated on a circle of hills, about a mile in diameter. Three spurs projected to the north, constituting a pronounced

<sup>1</sup> Consisting of four vessels mounting 4·7 inch to 10·2 inch guns, and four torpedo boats.

salient. This salient was, with its glacis-like slopes, naturally strong, and it had been rendered "well-nigh impregnable" by fortifications and a network of barbed-wire obstacles. The eastern face of the position was, if anything, stronger than the salient. But the western face had, for some unknown reason, been somewhat neglected. When, therefore, the Russians observed the troops of the 4th Division advancing along the sands, they drew off three field batteries from the position and posted them on rising ground to the south-west, from whence they could bring a cross fire to bear on the sands. Hereupon the Japanese flotilla, believing that the Russians were retreating, moved to a point from whence it could command the road and railway into Port Arthur. The sudden cessation of its fire enabled the Russians to concentrate their fire on the 4th Division, which suffered heavy losses. The Japanese flotilla was recalled by signal, but did not recommence its fire until 10 a.m. No attempt was made by the Russian fleet to interfere with this Japanese flotilla until after the battle was over, when a flotilla of destroyers came out from Port Arthur, but failed to find the Japanese vessels. The Japanese gunboats, however, were obliged to haul off at the fall of the tide about 2 p.m.

In the meantime the 1st Division had attempted to assault. The troops arrived within about 300 to 400 yards of the Russian trenches. This attempt brought on the 1st Division the concentrated fire of the defenders. At 10.30 a.m. the situation of

this division was so serious that General Oku found it necessary to push forward two battalions of the three which constituted his army reserve, while the artillery advanced to closer range.

The 3rd Division, in its advance against the Russian right, found itself enfiladed by Russian infantry on the southern shore of Hand Bay. It, nevertheless, progressed, reaching the railway line. But now the Russians brought a field battery into action against it from the neighbourhood of Ta-fang-shen; while about 10 a.m. the gunboat 'Bobr,' which had crept round from Port Arthur inside the mine-fields, came into action from Hand Bay against the left flank of the Japanese and continued in action until 2 p.m.

The situation of the 3rd Division was by 11 a.m. so serious that General Oku found it necessary to reinforce it with the remaining battalion of his army reserve.

At this time the Japanese advance was everywhere brought to a standstill, and, to make matters worse, it was reported that Russian troops were being conveyed across Hand Bay in launches with the intention of counter-attacking the 3rd Division. There were no reserves with which to meet this counter-attack, but two companies of engineers and a squadron of cavalry were hastily scraped together and despatched to resist it. The counter-attack did not, however, take place, and, indeed, the Russians maintain that there never was any attempt at one, and that the launches full of Russian troops existed in the Japanese

imagination alone. The point is of interest as showing what great results might have been expected had such a counter-attack actually been delivered, and the fear of it was probably responsible for the Japanese belief that it was about to occur.

The Japanese attack had failed, but they refused to give up the ground they had won. Frequent attempts were made to clear passages through the obstacles, but they also failed. Frequent telephone messages reached General Oku describing the "almost desperate situation of the first line." He had no reserves with which to intervene, and it is usually considered that in such circumstances the commander is powerless. But is it the case? Wellington considered that Napoleon's presence on the battlefield was equivalent to an additional 40,000 men. General Oku could not intervene with troops, but he could infuse his own spirit of inflexibility into his army. Had he at this juncture—the first battle in which the 2nd Army had been engaged—shown the slightest sign of wavering his army would have been beaten. The 4th Division had already suffered two repulses at Chin-Chou, though the place had been captured in the end. But he replied to the telephone messages as follows: "*The 1st Division to advance at all costs, the 4th and 3rd Divisions to act in concert with No. 1.*" Here was no sign of wavering; here was no sign even of excitement! All was as it should be, nothing unexpected had occurred! From time to time there went forth that same order—"The 1st Division to advance at all costs; the

4th and 3rd Divisions to act in concert with No. 1."

Here we see the virtue of inflexibility put to its true use.

From 11 a.m. till 3.30 p.m. the situation remained unchanged, except that the artillery ammunition was giving out, and there were no reserves of it.

At 3.30 p.m. General Oku ordered a renewed assault. But again it failed.

Let us see what sort of work the Japanese were called on to perform. Here is an account by a Russian artillery officer :

"At last we get our chance ; the tide has fallen and the enemy is trying to turn our flank. What their strength was at the beginning I can't say. Probably they had already suffered losses on our front. What we had before our guns appeared to be a battalion, but they had colours, and had therefore once been a regiment.<sup>1</sup> The enemy wheels towards the beach and comes straight at us : the men only advance with difficulty, wading in water up to the chest. The bottom is slippery clay ; we open fire : nearly every shot is a hit ; whoever is hit in the leg falls and is drowned, none of them rise again. They become fewer and fewer, but on they come. The colours move about, they pass from one hand to the other : still they are advancing. 'Load with shrapnel !' I shout. 'Faster ! Faster !' I no longer know what I order. Then I myself worked a gun—our losses were heavy. The wounded drag themselves along

<sup>1</sup>There were three battalions in a regiment.



and help to pass shell; even the dead horses seem to come to life again. Only with the last man did the colours sink into the water; only then did I realize what we had felt at the thought—‘The enemy will be on top of us at once.’ When everything was over and we only had the smooth surface of the sea before us, there were many volunteers to look for the colours. We thought that the flag might float up: it did not. The last bearer did not let go his grasp. The flag lies buried with him in the deep mud.”<sup>1</sup>

Let us now glance at the Russians. In the trenches on Nan-shan there were posted eight companies of infantry, with two scout detachments. In local reserve were  $1\frac{1}{2}$  companies. In general reserve were two companies.<sup>2</sup> In all, 2700 bayonets, supported by a powerful force of artillery with machine guns, under General Nadyein, were holding the Nan-shan position.

Away in rear, on the ridge about three miles behind Nan-shan, were posted three regiments of infantry, while one infantry regiment with a battery was still further in rear at the railway station of Nan-Kuan-ling.

In all, some 17,000 men with 114 guns, under the command of General Fock, who was at the railway junction at Ta-fang-shen, were available.

Before 3.30 p.m. both the local and general reserves had been exhausted, and General Nadyein had sent

<sup>1</sup> “Rasplata.”

<sup>2</sup> There were four companies in each battalion, twelve companies in a regiment.

back for two battalions. General Fock had refused them. Again, at about 4 p.m., General Nadyein had applied for reinforcements, but they did not arrive until 6 p.m., when two companies only arrived. The bulk of these were sent to the left flank, where the Russians had suffered severely.

But, in the meantime, at 5 p.m., General Oku had decided to use up the last of his artillery ammunition in an attempt to overwhelm the Russian machine guns. At the same time another assault was delivered. The troops of the 4th Division, wading further round through the sea, got further round the Russian left, and about 7.20 p.m. captured two redoubts just as the Russian reinforcements arrived. Almost simultaneously the 1st and 3rd Divisions succeeded in passing the obstacles in front of them and in assaulting the position.

But the evacuation of the position had already commenced at 6.45 p.m. in consequence of an order from General Stessel. General Fock had reported that the situation was extremely critical. On the 17th May General Kuropatkin had written to General Stessel as follows: "It appears highly desirable that General Fock's troops, and the guns on the Nan-shan position, should be withdrawn in good time, otherwise it will be a case of more trophies, perhaps 40 guns, falling into the hands of the enemy, a calamity which would have a most depressing effect on the troops."<sup>1</sup>

During their retreat the Russians were caught in

<sup>1</sup> *Off. Hist., Naval and Mil.*, p. 156.

closed masses by the Japanese artillery, which had hurried up. Their losses were 1100 men and 70 guns, of whom 650 men were killed and wounded during the retreat. The Japanese lost nearly 5000 men.

Of the 17,000 men available the Russians employed some 3000 only, and it was these 3000 who, it would seem, suffered all the losses. If the whole available force had been employed would the Japanese have succeeded? Who can say? A Russian counter-stroke by fresh troops, supported by renewed artillery fire—there was plenty of ammunition available at Nan-Kuan-ling—might well have given the Russians a victory. But such a counter-attack must have been purely frontal; and judging by the later battles of this war, frontal counter-attacks are repulsed with severe losses. General Kuropatkin's order, however, evidently did not contemplate a fight to a finish on the Nan-shan position. Rather than risk the defeat of another detachment he preferred that the isthmus, together with Dalny, should fall into the hands of the Japanese. True, it had been intended to destroy the wharves and docks, but the Russian retreat was too hasty. Yet it was with a view to guarding Dalny that Ta-lien Bay had been mined and the isthmus fortified. £8000 and three months of labour had already been expended on these fortifications.<sup>1</sup> Why, then, had so much money and

<sup>1</sup>The original peace estimate for the fortification of Nan-shan was £1900. This sum was refused, and the ultimate defences, constructed hurriedly, cost £8000.

labour been expended on this isthmus if it was not intended to hold it to the last? The answer appears to be that—as so often happens in war—the defeated generals had not definitely decided whether or no the isthmus should be held to the last.

Let us glance at the problem from their point of view.

The object was to hold Port Arthur and guard the fleet. The available garrison was barely sufficient to hold the fortress of Port Arthur; it had already been found necessary to land seamen from the fleet, and to withdraw guns from the ships of war.

The isthmus of Nan-shan was some thirty miles distant from Port Arthur in a straight line; while the coast-line of the peninsula measured about a hundred miles. There were numerous bays in the peninsula, not all of which had been mined. Pigeon Bay, notably, from which the Japanese fleet had bombarded the fortress, was not mined, and was not even under the guns of the fortress. Supposing the Japanese landed at one of these bays, and intervened between the Nan-shan isthmus and the fortress. The troops at Nan-shan might then be cut off, in which case the garrison at Port Arthur would probably prove insufficient to hold the place against assault. And neither would much warning be given of such a landing, nor would any attempt be made to interfere with it from seaward; for the fleet was clearly helpless. Then, the fortifications at Nan-shan were by no means complete. And, besides, the harbour at Dalny was protected merely by mine-fields and a

few guns. It was probable that the Japanese navy—in the absence of all interference by the Russian navy—would quickly clear away those mines and seize Dalny. It is evident that the attempt to hold the isthmus might quite possibly result in the fall of Port Arthur.

It will be seen that there were plenty of arguments in favour of the evacuation of the Nan-shan isthmus, or of merely holding it with a view to delaying the Japanese advance. It was undoubtedly a knotty problem, one the solution of which must be sought for, and a decision given, by the highest military authority in the Far East, that is, by the Russian Commander-in-chief. What, then, were the Viceroy's views? Unfortunately, the Russian official history of this period has not yet been published, and we are therefore unable to give the Viceroy's opinion. It will probably prove, however, that a divergence of opinion existed between the Viceroy and General Kuropatkin, and that the fortification of the peninsula was undertaken on the order of the former, but that the evacuation was due to the representations of the latter. Commander Semenoff, however, maintains that in this, as in other cases, the Viceroy would issue none but ambiguous instructions.

Immediately after the battle the Russians evacuated Dalny, endeavouring to remove what they could and to destroy the rest. But there was no time in which to do the work thoroughly, and large stores of railway plant, together with undamaged workshops, docks, wharves, etc., fell into the hands of the

Japanese. Thus the Japanese obtained a ready-made base for their operations not only against Port Arthur, but also for their operations to the north. Dalny became the base for the 3rd Army, which was destined to operate against Port Arthur, while the 2nd Army, which was to operate to the northward, was based on Talienwan. The bay, however, was sown with mines, and it was several weeks before these could be cleared. In the meantime troops and stores for the 2nd Army continued to be landed on the open beach near Pi-tzu-wo. For the time being, the railway was useless to the Japanese owing to lack of rolling stock and especially of engines. Three hundred trucks had been captured ; but all the engines had been removed by the Russians. The gauge was different to that in Japan, and it therefore became necessary either to alter the gauge or to construct the necessary rolling stock. The Japanese decided to alter the gauge. The Russians retreated to the "Position of the Passes" (Map No. 3, A-A), with advanced detachments posted one or two miles in front of it.

In the meantime, on the 15th May, the Japanese had suffered severe losses at sea. Captain Ivanov, of the Russian mine-laying ship 'Amur,' had carefully observed the manœuvres of the Japanese war vessels ; and, on the 14th May, under cover of a fog, he laid mines in the usual Japanese cruising ground about ten miles distant from the harbour. "At 10 a.m. a dull far-off explosion was heard, and the heights on shore and the rigging of the ships were

soon crowded with spectators. At such a distance few details could be seen, but the Japanese ships were observed to be in difficulties and to be lowering boats. Two more reports were heard, the second being very loud, and watchers on Golden Hill saw an immense explosion in one of the Japanese ships, followed almost immediately by the disappearance of the vessel. It could be seen that another vessel was in difficulties with a heavy list, and had the Russian admiral been in a position to follow up his advantage a great opportunity offered itself."<sup>1</sup> Only one Russian battleship, however, had steam up; and the Russians confined themselves to despatching their destroyers "to worry the damaged battleship, but not to attack." According to Commander Semenoff, the Japanese force within sight consisted of one damaged battleship, which could with difficulty be kept afloat, escorted by one battleship and two cruisers; while the Russian fleet was eagerly awaiting the order to sally forth and attack. Thus was the great chance, cleverly gained by a subordinate officer acting on his own initiative, thrown away.

The Japanese had lost one of their six first-class battleships, the 'Hatsuse,' while another, the 'Yashima,' had been seriously damaged. This much the Russians knew. They did not know, however, and the fact was successfully kept secret by the Japanese, that, in spite of all efforts to save the 'Yashima,' that vessel was also lost.

<sup>1</sup> *Official History, Naval and Military*, pp. 147, 148.

On this same day a second-class Japanese cruiser was rammed during a thick fog by another Japanese cruiser and sank; while two days later a destroyer struck a mine and was lost. Thus, within a few days, the Japanese had suffered a serious loss; and when it is remembered that they possessed no reserve of ships of war, and could neither construct nor purchase them, and that the Russian Baltic fleet was preparing to sail to the Far East, the extent of their loss will be appreciated.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE JAPANESE ADVANCE TO TELISSU OR WA-FANG-KOU.<sup>1</sup>

A FEW days after the Battle of the Yalu, on the 6th May, the 1st Japanese Army had reached Feng-huang-Cheng, pushing out a detachment of one infantry brigade of the 12th Division, together with cavalry and artillery, to the east, to the road which runs from Siojo by Sai-ma-chi to Mukden. This detachment was posted at Kuan-tien-Cheng, about forty-five miles distant from the army. Since that date the 1st Army had been making preparations for its further advance.

On the 19th May, that is, three and a half months after the commencement of hostilities, the 10th Division, which was termed the 4th Army, commenced to land at Ta-Ku-Shan, and completed its disembarkation on the 9th June. The Japanese had maintained the utmost secrecy as to the composition and strength of this army; and, from the moment its disembarkation commenced, the Russians appear to have exaggerated its strength. They had fought against the 1st and 2nd Armies; and it is certain that

<sup>1</sup> Known as Wa-fang-kou in Russian and French accounts.

they had, consequently, ascertained the number of divisions of the first line of which these two armies were composed, though they were in considerable doubt as to the strength of each division and the number of reserve (or *Kobi*) brigades attached to each army. They could thus account for three divisions in the 1st Army and three in the 2nd Army. This would leave seven divisions unaccounted for. Of these they probably assumed that at least two or, perhaps, three divisions constituted the 4th Army landing at Ta-Ku-Shan.

Russian cavalry, supported by infantry, was watching the Japanese and, doubtless, seeking to perform the stereotyped rôle of cavalry, and to ascertain the strength and composition of each Japanese army. In front of the 1st Japanese Army there was a force of 3600 Russian cavalry under General Renenkampf; in front of the 4th Japanese Army was General Mishchenko with 3000 cavalry and a horse battery; while on the railway line, watching the 2nd Japanese Army, was another force of 3000 cavalry. Yet all this mass of cavalry could ascertain nothing, notwithstanding that the Japanese cavalry were conspicuous by their absence. The difficulty was that the Japanese threw out screens well in advance of their main bodies, consisting of small detachments of all arms, which were entrenched in the numerous Chinese villages, while in advance of these was a line of Japanese cavalry patrols to give warning of a Russian advance. Now these villages were strongly constructed, generally with high

walls round them—as at Chin-Chou. If a Russian patrol penetrated between two of them it seldom, if ever, came back. To gain information it was necessary to break through this Japanese screen, that is, to capture two or more of these villages, and so open a path for reconnoitring patrols. But the capture of one of these villages was impracticable to cavalry, even though it was supported by artillery. It is true that the fire of the Japanese in the village might be dominated, but what then?—the Japanese would not go! It became necessary to turn out the garrison with cold steel. Were the Russian cavalry troopers to assault on foot, sword in hand? A few regiments only had bayonets. While engaged in the fire action were they to carry their sabres between their teeth with a view to assault, or were these sabres to be slung on a belt to dangle between their legs? Or was one portion of the force to fight the fire action and another portion to assault? The Russians evidently considered that infantry was necessary with which to break through these screens. But to bring up even a small force of infantry of one or two battalions was a serious matter. It would be unsupported; and there was never any knowing what force of Japanese lay hidden immediately behind their screens. To bring up a large force of infantry was an even more serious matter; the difficulties of supply would be great; the march would be toilsome and arduous; the Japanese intelligence, which was already known to be so admirable, and the Japanese cavalry patrols, would give them

warning—and then there would be another unfortunate defeat of a detachment. Two detachments had already been beaten, notwithstanding that it was General Kuropatkin's chief desire to avoid being beaten in detail. Still, this was the only course to adopt if information was to be obtained ; and, as we shall see, this course, reconnaissance in force, was later on tried, but without much success. It has generally been asserted that the failure to obtain information was the fault of the cavalry—that it was inefficient. General Stakelberg, of whom we shall hear more presently, protests strongly against this view. He points out that the Russian cavalry were obliged to obtain information in a country of which the inhabitants were hostile, and of whose language they were entirely ignorant. In such circumstances, he says, information can only be obtained by means of secret agents. He draws attention to the fact that many military writers have stated of the Franco-German war of 1870-71 that information cannot be obtained by cavalry, but must be obtained by espionage. He asserts, moreover, that, when in May, 1904, he assumed command of an army corps, there existed no intelligence system in the Russian army. He himself attempted to establish one, but he failed, not for lack of money, but for lack of men with the necessary knowledge. He asserts that an intelligence system cannot be improvised ; and in this, at least, he will be supported by every man with experience of intelligence work in the field. He maintains that the system must be

established in peace time; and he concludes by pointing to the fact that the Russians had plenty of cavalry but no secret agents and no information; whereas the Japanese had but few cavalry, many secret agents and, consequently, admirable information.<sup>1</sup>

So it was that General Kuropatkin was left in ignorance of the Japanese forces with which he had to deal. And at this time—during the progress of events which culminated in Nan-shan—the Viceroy, constantly receiving alarmist reports from General Stessel, was urging General Kuropatkin to move to the assistance of Port Arthur. On May 21st the Viceroy considered the moment favourable for an offensive either towards the Yalu or towards Port Arthur. After the Battle of Nan-shan, General Stessel “gave up hope of a successful defence of Port Arthur,” says General Kuropatkin, “. . . urging me to support him speedily and in strength.” General Kuropatkin, however, on the 29th and 30th May protested against the expediency of an offensive movement at that time. On the 31st May the Viceroy “urgently requested” General Kuropatkin to advance to the relief of the fortress, “and expressed the wish that four divisions should be detailed for the operation.”

General Kuropatkin evidently again objected; and on the 5th June, the Viceroy telegraphed that “Port

<sup>1</sup> *Conférences*, vol. i. app. 4, p. 138. There seems to be no doubt that the Russians employed—later in the war, at all events—numerous secret agents; but these were ignorant, untrained, and untrustworthy Chinese.

Arthur cannot strictly be called a storm-proof fortress, and it is a question whether it can even stand a siege of the length indicated in my telegram of May 16th"—that is, of two to three months.<sup>1</sup> Again on June 6th the Viceroy quoted to General Kuropatkin "a message from St. Petersburg in which it was stated that the time was 'ripe for the Manchurian Army to assume the offensive.'" <sup>2</sup>

General Kuropatkin himself gives us his objections to an offensive at this time. We must, first of all, bear in mind his original plan of operations, namely, to avoid the defeat of detachments, and to retire, if necessary, back to Harbin while delaying the Japanese, with a view to ultimately assuming the offensive with overwhelming numbers. He believed—as is apparent from a letter which he wrote to General Stessel on the 17th May <sup>3</sup>—that the Japanese would invest Port Arthur and concentrate their main force against the Russian field army; but he had also taken into consideration the possibility that they might merely watch the Russian field army and devote their main attention to the capture of the fortress. In the latter event he intended to assume the offensive as soon as he was strong enough to hold off the Japanese armies advancing from the Yalu and from Kaiping, at which latter

<sup>1</sup> See p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. i. pp. 215 *et seq.* The Russian Official History for this period has not yet been published.

<sup>3</sup> *Official History, Naval and Military*, pp. 155, 156.

place he believed the Japanese were about to land.

The troops that were available for an offensive at the beginning of June, 1904, were divided into a central mass and two wings. The central mass was about Liao-yang and Mukden. One wing, known as the Southern force, was pushed south down the railway line. The other wing, known as the Eastern force, was pushed forward on the road to Korea.

General Stakelberg was in command of the 1st Siberian Army Corps. His troops, which numbered some 30,000 infantry, 3000 cavalry, and 100 guns were disposed about Kaiping and Newchuang, the cavalry being pushed forward to Telissu.

There was a detachment of two infantry regiments covering his left flank and holding the passes at Fen-shui-ling. These were supported by a brigade at Hsi-mu-Cheng. In front of these was General Mishchenko with his cavalry (3000) watching the 4th Japanese Army.

Away to the east was a force of 23,000 infantry with 90 guns under Count Keller holding the passes about the Mo-tien-ling; with 3600 cavalry under General Rennenkampf in front and on their left flank at Sai-ma-chi.

Behind these advanced detachments was the reserve of the army at Mukden and Liao-yang, under General Kuropatkin himself, consisting of 36,000 infantry, 6000 cavalry, and 120 guns.

It will be seen that the Russian field force now numbered some 90,000 infantry, 15,000 cavalry, and

316 guns. Thus within three months of the commencement of hostilities the "impenetrable veil" had been brought up to the required strength, the Russian field force having been increased by some 30,000 infantry, 12,000 cavalry, and 150 guns. And the rate at which reinforcements might be calculated to arrive would increase as the Siberian Railway was perfected and the diversion round Lake Baikal completed.

During May ten trains with troops were arriving daily at Liao-yang from Harbin, though only three trains a day could reach Harbin from Russia.<sup>1</sup> But the most strenuous efforts were being made to increase the carrying capacity of the Siberian line up to fourteen trains a day on the Siberian line and eighteen a day on the Eastern Chinese line. To give an illustration of the magnitude of the task to be executed, we may mention that to increase the carrying capacity of the Eastern Chinese Railway to only twelve trains a day would involve the expenditure of over £4,000,000, the delivery and distribution of nearly 10,000 tons of rails, sleepers, and fish-plates, and the construction of 224 engine sheds, 373,400 square feet of workshops, and 265,000 square feet of platforms. Rolling stock—335 engines, 2350

<sup>1</sup> At the outbreak of hostilities only two trains a day, each way, could pass along the Siberian Railway. By the middle of May these had been increased to three trains a day. By August, 1904 they had increased to eleven trains a day; and by January, 1905, to fourteen. 120 trains were required to transport one army corps; and, in view of the enormous quantity of material for railway construction and supplies required by the army in Manchuria, a small percentage only of the available trains could be utilised for the transport of troops.



covered wagons, 810 trucks, and 113 passenger coaches—must also be collected.

Many months of work were therefore necessary before the railways could be brought up to the capacity required of them, and before sufficient troops could be concentrated south of Harbin, with which to execute General Kuropatkin's offensive plan.

General Kuropatkin first points out that the positions of the hostile armies had not been fixed; one army had forced the passage of the Yalu, and one had landed at Pi-tzu-wo, but the whereabouts of one-half of the Japanese forces was still unknown. A disembarkation was, however, in progress at Ta-Ku-Shan; but the strength of the forces landing at that place was also unknown. Consequently, General Kuropatkin writes: "We were thus not in possession of two important pieces of knowledge which were necessary before any operations of a decisive character could be undertaken—namely, the position of the enemy's main forces, and their probable plan of operations."

"It was incumbent on us, therefore," he continues, "to exercise great caution, and to keep our forces as far as possible concentrated, so as to be ready to meet the attack of two or even three armies."

Here, then, were his arguments against an offensive in any direction at all. Admiral Alexiev, a sailor, acting in his capacity as Commander-in-chief, might well be pardoned for pointing out a certain fallacy in the arguments. Frederick the Great asserted that if he but knew his enemy's plans he could always

beat him with inferior numbers ; and when a great general like Frederick the Great, Napoleon, Wellington, or Moltke, discovered the position of the enemy's forces, he was usually—not always—able to divine his enemy's plans. But the most noticeable feature of the campaigns of great leaders is that they constantly acted before they possessed knowledge, definite or otherwise, of the positions or plans of the enemy, but simply on their power to divine the enemy's intentions. Thus Napoleon did not know the position of the Austrians at Ulm until his right wing struck them ; and neither did he know of the whereabouts of the Prussians at Jena until his left wing struck them. Moltke commenced his great wheel to the north to intercept the French army at Sedan on information which he distrusted and believed to emanate from the French ; but which, on second thoughts, he considered was probably true in view of the state of French politics. Nelson, in his pursuit of Villeneuve, acted almost entirely on his power to divine his adversary's intentions. The true difference between the great leader and the mediocrity would seem to be that the former possesses a power of divination which the latter lacks : he can look into the brain of his adversary ; he can see the situation with the eyes of that adversary ; he can divine the course that the adversary will most probably adopt. The mediocrity can do neither the one nor the other. And, in addition, the great leader possesses the courage to act on probabilities ; he is prepared to take the chances.

There are but few men in history who have possessed both this capacity and this courage; most men lack either the one or the other. Admiral Alexiev would be perfectly justified in pointing out that, if General Kuropatkin proposed to wait until he knew for certain the enemy's positions and his probable plans, he might wait till doomsday.

But General Kuropatkin also pointed out that the numerical weakness of the Russian army at this time "absolutely precluded a general assumption of the offensive." If an offensive was to be undertaken it was, then, necessary to advance against either the 1st or 2nd Japanese Army while "containing" the other.

General Kuropatkin proceeded to explain the difficulties in the way of assuming the offensive towards the Yalu against the 1st and 4th Japanese Armies.

During an offensive towards the Yalu the Russian right flank and rear must be guarded against a possible Japanese advance up the railway from Pi-tzu-wo or against a possible landing at Ying-Kou or Kaiping.<sup>1</sup>

"Not more than sixty to seventy battalions were available of the ninety-four which, in the middle of May, constituted the army."

The local food resources between Liao-yang and Feng-huang-Cheng had been exhausted. All the food

<sup>1</sup>The Russians apparently knew that the "1st Army" had landed in Korea, that the "2nd Army" had landed at Pi-tzu-wo, and that the "4th Army" was landing at Ta-Ku-Shan. Where, then, was the "3rd Army"? It seemed probable to the Russians that it would land at Ying-Kou.

for the troops must therefore be brought up by rail to Liao-yang, and thence transported by road.

But the necessary transport was lacking; there was only sufficient to carry three to four days' supply for the force of sixty to seventy battalions. Hence the force might march out two to three days' march, but must then come back again.

The rainy season would make the movement of guns and baggage "at first difficult, and then impossible."

The Russians possessed neither mountain artillery nor pack transport.

They were badly off for artillery horses.

If the 1st Japanese Army, refusing battle, fell back towards the Yalu, the Russian offensive would come to a standstill. It would be a blow in the air. Then a retreat to Liao-yang must ensue; and one corps, at least, must be left to cover this retreat. But this corps itself would be in great danger of being suddenly overwhelmed by the 1st Japanese Army, which possessed both pack transport and mountain artillery, and, therefore, mobility.

"For these reasons," General Kuropatkin writes, "an offensive towards the Yalu was impracticable."

Were these reasons insufficient?

It is easy to say that difficulties are made to be overcome. So they are; but time is required in which to overcome them. Foresight is also necessary. If the possibility of an offensive towards the Yalu by a great mass of men at so early a date had been foreseen in time of peace, and if

the commercial interests of the timber company had been less exacting, money would doubtless have been forthcoming for the preparation of the necessary transport, both wheel and pack, roads would have been constructed or improved,<sup>1</sup> supplies would have been accumulated at various points, mountain artillery would have been furnished to the army. But the necessity for these preparations had not been foreseen, inasmuch as the Russian fleet was "invincible." Having failed to foresee the difficulties, they could not be overcome in the time available; but the Japanese, who had foreseen these self-same difficulties, and who had laboured under no unfortunate delusions, were able to overcome them.

General Kuropatkin then explains the difficulties in the way of an offensive towards Port Arthur against the 2nd Japanese Army.

The Viceroy had, apparently, laid down certain conditions as regards leaving a force to hold the passes over the Fen-shui-ling mountain range, with a view to the protection of Liao-yang, which he termed "the key of the strategic position of the Russians," against the 1st Japanese Army. A reserve was also to be posted at Hai-Cheng. Hence, General Kuropatkin states, one corps of twenty-four battalions only was available for the contemplated offensive towards Port Arthur.

"In view of the possibility," General Kuropatkin

<sup>1</sup> The road, as far as Feng-huang-Cheng, had actually been improved by order of General Kuropatkin when he first assumed command of the army.

writes, "of Kuroki taking the offensive in superior force (after reinforcement by the troops already beginning to land at Ta-Ku-Shan) against our cordon, which extended along the Fen-shui-ling range for more than sixty-six miles, and in view of the possibility of the Japanese cutting off any detachment moving on Port Arthur by landing somewhere in its rear, the despatch of this corps 130 miles to the south could not but be considered a most risky and difficult operation."<sup>1</sup> General Kuropatkin also pointed out that such a movement might involve the disorganisation of the whole army.

It is difficult to find any flaw in these arguments.

The question arises, were the advantages to be gained by an offensive worth the risks to be run? The risks were undoubtedly great. The advantages were the relief of Port Arthur.

Would the contemplated offensive secure the relief of Port Arthur?

Even if the Russians managed to defeat the 1st Army near Feng-huang-Cheng, it is difficult to see that it would necessarily relieve the pressure on Port Arthur. But on this point there appears to have been a serious difference of opinion between General Kuropatkin and the Viceroy. The latter possessed a chief of the staff, General Jilinski, who was apparently his military adviser. Here, at once, we see a sufficient cause for the friction between the Viceroy and General Kuropatkin. A man of Admiral Alexiev's "inflexibility" would be certain

<sup>1</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. ii. p. 217.

to select as chief of his staff a soldier who would reflect his own views; and he was, therefore, always in a position to counter General Kuropatkin's views when they were opposed to his own with a military opinion. It was a pernicious system of command which must infallibly lead to friction and defeat. General Jilinski asserted in the *conférences* that if General Kuroki was forced back behind the Yalu, the Japanese would not be able to undertake anything serious against Port Arthur for a long time. This was also the Viceroy's view, and was quite opposed to General Kuropatkin's view. There was still the 3rd Japanese Army to be considered. Suppose that army landed at Ying-Kou or Kaiping, and marched on Liao-yang while the bulk of the Russian army was engaged on the Yalu, it would probably result in the utter destruction of the Russian army.

A mere threat at Ying-Kou would, in any case, at once recall the Russian army from the Yalu to Liao-yang. An advance towards the Yalu, unless it could be combined with an advance in force down the railway line while Kaiping and Ying-Kou were strongly held, not only offered no prospects of advantageous results, but would accept tremendous risks. But a general offensive was another thing—a matter for the future.

A successful offensive towards Port Arthur was, then, the only prospect of relieving the fortress; but if the 3rd Japanese Army landed at Ying-Kou, and their 1st Army also advanced, the Russian army

itself, even though victorious, might well require to be "relieved."

But there is another and more important point. It was evidently not at all clear to General Kuropatkin that Port Arthur required to be "relieved." The fears for its safety were now aroused, not so much lest it should succumb to starvation, as that it should fall to assault. General Kuropatkin states that the available combatant garrison, including the personnel of the fleet, amounted to 45,000 men, "and that the enemy could not therefore have any very overwhelming superiority." It was General Stessel, the Commandant of the Kuan-tung Peninsula, who required to be relieved, and not the fortress. This fact General Kuropatkin recognised, and he ordered General Stessel to escape in a torpedo boat to Ying-Kou. General Stessel, however, made no attempt to do so; and his failure to obey the order constituted one of the charges on which he was afterwards tried by court-martial.

General Kuropatkin appears to have explained his objections to an offensive very fully to the Viceroy; but, nevertheless, he was overruled, and ordered to assume the offensive.

Yet General Kuropatkin's arguments against an offensive were simply overwhelming; and it must have been evident to the Viceroy that in ordering an offensive he was despatching a portion of the army to certain disaster without the smallest hope of achieving success. So evident is it that it is necessary to seek for some motive besides that of



strategy. This motive is, perhaps, to be found in the political situation in Russia at that time.

The war had not been popular in Russia. Unlike the Japanese, of whom every man, woman, and child was wrought up to a pitch of excitement, enthusiasm, and resolution, the mass of the Russian people were unaware of the cause of the struggle ; but they seem to have been dimly suspicious that the war was the direct result of certain financial speculations on the part of the "ruling classes" of the country. When, therefore, they saw men of the reserves recalled to the colours and despatched to a distance of some thousands of miles to fight, not in a quarrel of their own, not in an attempt to safeguard their own homes or the national interest, but in the interests of the ruling class, their dull hatred of that ruling class broke out. For, though the Russian peasantry regarded the Czar with a devotion and loyalty almost unexampled except in Japan, yet their loyalty would not appear to have been extended to the ruling and wealthy classes. There is nearly always, in every nation, an undercurrent of hostility on the part of the poverty-stricken against the wealthy classes, which, though dormant in a period of great national prosperity, is always apt to awaken in times of commercial depression or defeat in war. To make matters worse, so far as Russia was concerned, there existed in that country a strong revolutionary class which was only kept in subjection by the steinest measures, and which ever sought an opportunity to forward its political objects. The

war in the Far East, and the general dissatisfaction, gave it its opportunity. And that general discontent was by no means allayed by the news of Russian defeats. It was further increased by the increased cost of the necessaries of life—an inevitable feature of all war, even in a country so self-supporting and sparsely populated as Russia. This difficulty of living and the misery of the poverty-stricken classes increased from month to month, until finally it came to be the primary cause of the Russian submission. In this connection we may quote the words of a Russian workman, reported in the *Times* of March, 1905, when the troubles in Russia had reached a head. "Constitution!" he said. "We don't know what that is. The majority of us are unable to read. Ours is not a political movement; we want to live—that's all!"

With the news of the outbreak of war and the defeat of the Russian fleet at Port Arthur, muttering in Russia commenced, directed against the authors of the war. With the defeat on the Yalu the muttering grew louder. The Japanese were not slow to grasp the meaning and their opportunity. They broke through their custom of secrecy, and loudly advertised the intended attack on Nan-shan. For days before the attack was delivered the European press teemed with "information from reliable sources" regarding the preparations for the battle. So contrary to the usual Japanese custom was this advertisement of their intentions, that many students of war—and amongst them, perhaps, General

Kuropatkin—disbelieved the news, preferring rather to believe that Japanese cunning had at last overreached itself, and that the information was too obviously false to be credited. But, in this case, it was true!

After the Battle of Nan-shan it quickly became apparent to the Russian people that there were Russian troops and a Russian fleet shut up in a fortress which was about to be beleaguered and besieged. And it is probable that such messages or letters as reached Russia from the garrison and sailors in Port Arthur expressed the bitterness in the hearts of the subordinate ranks, and served to inflame the feeling against the ruling class. The grumbling in Russia broke into a clamour; and it was probably with the object of allaying the popular excitement that General Kuropatkin was ordered to assume the offensive. "The time was ripe for an offensive"—it always is in war; it is never ripe for anything else, if it can be avoided. As in France in 1870, a "victory" was essential. Those who order a "victory" at such a juncture forget that the commander in the field is positively obsessed with the one idea of winning a victory—and of avoiding another defeat, and that it is inconceivably foolish to force his hand and to render his task more difficult at such a moment. The demand for a "victory" invariably defeats its own purpose. It is followed inevitably—if the commander in the field gives way to it—by a hare-brained and haphazard adventure which results, not in victory, but in defeat.

And so it was in Manchuria in June, 1904. Admiral Alexiev and the authorities in St. Petersburg,<sup>1</sup> deeply concerned for the political situation in Russia, apparently disregarded the fact that they were playing into the Japanese hands, that once more they were about to be outwitted, that once more they were about to send a detachment to be defeated, and so do the one thing of all others that General Kuropatkin desired to avoid, and the one thing of all others that the Japanese desired should be done. General Kuropatkin did not give way until he received a categorical order from the Viceroy, the Commander-in-chief. He was given the following alternative on the 19th May: To leave a screen, on the railway, facing south; and to fall with all his forces on Kuroki. Or, to place a "solid screen" facing Kuroki, and to assume the offensive to the south against the hostile troops which were threatening Port Arthur.<sup>2</sup> He chose the lesser evil, and ordered an offensive movement down the railway line.

On the 28th May orders were issued to General Stakelberg to assume the offensive towards Port Arthur. His army corps was reinforced to a strength

<sup>1</sup>General Jilinski denies "categorically" that the effort to relieve Port Arthur was dictated from St. Petersburg; but, as we have seen, according to General Kuropatkin, a message from St. Petersburg was quoted to him to the effect that the time "was ripe for the Manchurian army to assume the offensive." It was, apparently, this message, emanating, or purporting to emanate, from the Czar which induced him to give way.

<sup>2</sup>*Conférences*, vol. i. app. 3, p. 120.

of 35,000 men with 100 guns, of which 1600 were cavalry under General Samsonov.

The question arises, should General Kuropatkin have given way in this matter? Should he not rather have resigned? The great Napoleon asserts that "Every general-in-chief who undertakes to execute a plan which he believes is bad and will prove to be disastrous, is criminal. He ought to represent, to insist on the plan being altered: finally, to resign sooner than be the instrument of the ruin of his people."<sup>1</sup>

There are numerous cases throughout history in which a general, giving way to the statesman, has attempted to carry out a plan which he fears will prove disastrous, with the result that he has been the direct instrument of the ruin of his army and of his people. Marshal MacMahon, in 1870, marched to Sedan, to the "relief" of Metz, against his better judgment, in almost exactly similar circumstances to those in Manchuria in 1904. In so doing he sacrificed his army, and threw away the one hope of saving his country.

In 1861 the Confederate generals desired, after the victory of Bull Run, to assume the offensive. The President objected. The generals gave way. The result was that, though the Confederates won many resounding victories, the Confederate States, nevertheless, suffered the horrors of war for four years, and were finally subjugated and trodden under the heel of the conqueror.

<sup>1</sup> French official account of the Franco-German War of 1870, "Army of Chalons," vol. i. p. 200.

These two instances will serve to show that a general in chief command owes duty, not only to the statesman, but also to the army of which he is in command, and, above all, to his country. Is he justified in deliberately adopting a plan which he believes will ruin his army, and, consequently, his country, on the ground of loyalty to an individual who, like himself, is but a servant of the State? What is "loyalty"? When a man suppresses his strongest convictions and supports his superiors in a course of action which he knows will prove fatal to his country—is that loyalty? It may be; if the subordinate has perfect confidence in the ability of his chief and but little in his own capacity. But when the subordinate has confidence in his own capacity and knows that his chief is ignorant of the business in hand, is it, then, loyalty? No; rather is it the fidelity of the dog to the hand which feeds, or punishes. Such fidelity is seldom due to an abstract sense of loyalty; but generally, it is to be feared, to the knowledge that a lack of fidelity will certainly result in stripes or a lack of food.

It is commonly forgotten that, in war, the most vital of all national interests is the victory of the armed forces, and that the only man who is in a position to judge of the chances of success or failure of any particular operation is the actual commander of that armed force.

Admiral Alexiev, the Viceroy, though he was also Commander-in-chief, was in no position to judge of the chances of success or failure of the contemplated

offensive. He was a sailor; what should he know of overland transport or the supply of an army in the field? True, he could judge of the situation of the Russian fleet—as to its capacity for offence or defence; but the ultimate safety of that fleet now depended solely on the victory or defeat of the army.

Should not General Kuropatkin have resigned rather than execute the Viceroy's plan?

It will be seen that the Russian leaders were not so much engaged in fighting the Japanese as in fighting each other. A dual control, with its inevitable friction and indecision, is the certain precursor of defeat—is usually, indeed, a primary cause of it. To disregard, as so often happens in the study of war, the friction existing in the supreme leadership is to deprive ourselves of all possible benefits which we hope to gain by our study. Let us, rather, probe into the matter and seek to discover causes and motives, so that we may learn how to avoid a similar disastrous state of affairs.

Now, it really appears as though the Japanese intelligence system was so admirable that they knew of the diverse views which were held by Admiral Alexiev and General Kuropatkin, and that they were awaiting the decision. According to Russian writers the whole theatre was thickly sown with Japanese secret agents; and as no attempt was, apparently, ever made by the Russians to keep their deliberations secret, or to spread false information, it was hardly to be wondered at that the Japanese knew of the Russian

decisions almost as soon as they were formed—knew, as it seems, even of the progress of the deliberations. Either we must account for the Japanese operations in this manner, or, surely, the Japanese leaders possessed a most remarkable power of divination. The Viceroy presented his alternative to General Kuropatkin on the 19th May. The latter made his decision on the 27th May. He issued verbal orders to General Stakelberg on the 28th May. General Oku heard rumours of the intended advance on the 29th and 30th May, and as early as the 28th May the 1st Japanese Army executed a movement which immediately attracted General Kuropatkin's attention to that quarter. It seems probable that the Imperial Japanese Headquarters were kept fully informed of the deliberations between the Viceroy and General Kuropatkin. The detachment of the 1st Army, which was posted on the road from Siojo to Mukden, suddenly advanced about fifteen miles to Ai-yang-Cheng. This detachment consisted in reality only of one infantry brigade with three squadrons of cavalry and two batteries of artillery; but the Russians had largely exaggerated its numbers. Now, by this road the Japanese could strike directly at the Russian communications, either at Liao-yang, or between that place and Mukden, or at Mukden itself. The railway line was, as General Kuropatkin so constantly and urgently points out in his book, vital to the very existence of the Russian army, and the slightest threat against it rendered him extremely nervous. Throughout the war the Russians maintained a



force of 55,000 men for the defence of the railway between the Ural Mountains and the Manchurian frontier; and an additional 25,000 men (64 infantry companies, 65 squadrons; and 10 batteries) for the defence of the railway in Manchuria. Every bridge was guarded. These safeguards were by no means unnecessary; for in one month there were no less than ninety attempts to damage the railway between Mukden and Tieh-ling. These attempts were apparently executed by a large tribe of professional brigands, the Hun-tu-huses, who lived scattered throughout Manchuria. For a century past the Chinese had been in the habit of deporting their bad characters to the inhospitable regions of Manchuria; and it was of these that the Hun-tu-huses were composed. The Chinese also maintained a military force on the frontier between Mongolia and Manchuria on purpose to watch these brigands. The Russians, however, did not know what relations existed between the Japanese, the Chinese force of observation—a division of the “new model” Chinese army under General Ma—and the Hun-tu-huses. But it is easily to be seen that, with these conditions, powerful Russian forces were necessary for the defence of the railway line. On hearing of this Japanese movement to Ai-yang-Cheng, therefore, General Kuropatkin immediately weakened General Stakelberg’s force to strengthen his left, which was opposed to the 1st Japanese Army.

But as a matter of fact the 1st Japanese Army was not yet in a condition to advance, for the supply

and transport difficulties to be overcome were so tremendous.

Yet, on the 2nd June, five days after General Kuropatkin had issued his verbal orders to General Stakelberg, the Imperial Japanese Headquarters issued orders to the 1st and 4th Armies to assume the offensive. Now they must have known perfectly well that the 1st Army was not ready to assume the offensive; then why should they have issued an order which they knew could not be executed? It would be interesting to know whether this order by chance reached the Russians. The object of a demonstration by the 1st and 4th Armies is evident. It would serve to threaten the Russian left flank and line of communication, and so distract General Kuropatkin's attention from the railway, and induce him to weaken the force with which he proposed to assume the offensive.

Assuming for a moment that the Japanese order did reach the Russians, let us study the probable results of it. It would induce General Kuropatkin to stop General Stakelberg's advance, temporarily, for a few days. Then finding that no serious advance by the 1st or 4th Japanese Armies had taken place, he would either recognise that his information had been false, or believe that the Japanese were frightened of his projected offensive movement down the railway line, and had therefore stopped their own advance. He would then push on his offensive movement down the railway line in haste with such troops as he might have immediately available. The 2nd Japanese Army

would then get its opportunity. As we shall see, this is exactly what occurred.

It is this cunning utilisation of false information, accompanied by threats and demonstrations, and the effect of these on the nerves of the respective commanders, that constitutes what is, practically, an unwritten history of war. It is this unwritten history of war, this play of wits between the hostile commanders, which constitutes the soul of the conduct of war. Eliminate it, and you have but a lay figure, the contemplation of which, though interesting, is neither very instructive nor of much value for our future guidance in the conduct of war.

The 1st Japanese Army, being unready to advance, contented itself with making demonstrations on the roads both to Mukden and to Liao-yang. On the 6th June the advanced troops of the 2nd Division attacked the Russian outposts on the Liao-yang road. The 4th Army (the 10th Division) had not yet fully completed its landing, but General Kawamura nevertheless determined to seize Hsiu-yen. Fearing, however, that the Russians in front of him were too strong for him, he applied to General Kuroki for assistance. The latter immediately despatched to join the 4th Army an infantry brigade of the Guard division, two squadrons, two batteries, and a company of engineers. On the 5th June General Mishchenko heard that the 4th Japanese Army had been reinforced and had advanced. He immediately retired, reporting his news to General Kuropatkin. As a matter of fact the 4th Army did

not advance until the 6th. It is interesting to note that the Russians obtained very early information of the Japanese movements in this case, whereas in other cases they received no inkling of movements until they had taken place. It is also interesting to note that in this case it was all to the advantage of the Japanese that the Russians should believe that the 4th Army had marched a day or two before it actually did move. We shall find further instances which lead us to believe that the Japanese knew when to observe secrecy and when to divulge secrets. The one is not less important than the other.

On the 7th and 8th June a squadron of gunboats and torpedo boats bombarded the coast in the neighbourhood of Kaiping.

On the 7th also a detachment of the brigade at Ai-yang-Cheng occupied Sai-ma-chi on the road to Mukden. It was a mere demonstration, for the place was again evacuated on the 9th immediately an attack on the detachment by the Russians became imminent.

On the 8th the 4th Army attacked Mishchenko's cavalry and occupied Hsiu-yen. Here it halted: for the Russian offensive movement against the 2nd Army had already come to a standstill.

Meanwhile the 2nd Japanese Army, which already consisted of the 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th Divisions, the 1st Cavalry Brigade, and the 1st Artillery Brigade, had been reinforced by the 11th Division, which had landed near Pi-tzu-wo between the 21st and 30th May. This force was now broken up. The 1st and

11th Divisions constituted the 3rd Army for operations against the fortress; while the remainder constituted the 2nd Army for the advance northwards. The 5th Division, one brigade of the 4th Division, and the 1st Cavalry Brigade were still holding the line Pu-lan-tien—Ta-Sha River. These were joined by the 3rd and 4th Divisions and the 1st Artillery Brigade on the 2nd and 3rd June; and the whole army entrenched itself strongly.

Rumours of the projected Russian advance had, as we have seen, reached General Oku as early as the 30th, or even 29th May. On the 30th May General Oku despatched his cavalry brigade to reconnoitre to the north of Wa-fang-tien, supporting it with some infantry of the 5th Division.

The advanced guard of the Japanese cavalry came upon the Russian advanced squadrons just south of Telissu. A skirmish ensued in which the leading Japanese squadron was roughly handled by three Russian squadrons, being charged in front and flank. This is the only instance of cavalry shock action which occurred during the war.

The cavalry of both sides was now reinforced by infantry, and daily reconnaissances were carried out by both combatants. On the 3rd June there was a more serious skirmish in which both sides deployed infantry. The Japanese immediately recalled their advanced detachment; and on the 4th and 5th June the cavalry, with its infantry support, leaving patrols to watch the enemy, retreated behind the lines at Pu-lan-tien.

The trains of the 2nd Army had not yet been fully landed, and neither was the line of communication fully organised. General Oku therefore decided to defer his advance, and to stand on the defensive. The 3rd Division was on the right, the 5th in the centre, and the 4th on the left. The cavalry brigade was moved to the right flank, the reason given being that the country on that flank, which was hilly, or indeed mountainous, was better suited for cavalry action. So without doubt it was—better suited to the Japanese cavalry, that is.<sup>1</sup> .

On the 5th June General Stakelberg arrived at Telissu, together with one infantry division. Seeing that the Japanese had retreated, he ordered his cavalry to push forward about five miles and to entrench itself.

It was on the 7th that General Kuropatkin issued his written instructions to General Stakelberg. He was labouring under a delusion, believing, evidently, that the 2nd Japanese Army was attacking Port Arthur, and that General Stakelberg would have to deal only with a "covering force" posted about Pulan-tien to defend the rear of the Japanese. He was, probably, quite unaware of the disembarkation of the Japanese 5th and 11th Divisions at Pi-tzu-wo, and he believed, perhaps, in the false reports which at this time were rife of intended assaults on Port Arthur.

<sup>1</sup> It seems probable that General Oku had no intention of permitting his cavalry to be defeated and demoralised by the superior Russian cavalry in shock-action encounters; and that he very wisely withdrew it out of danger, and employed it in country where dismounted action only was possible.

His orders therefore directed General Stakelberg to "draw on himself the greatest possible number of the enemy's forces," and thereby to weaken the enemy's army operating in the Kuan-tung Peninsula. General Stakelberg was to conduct his advance with energy and rapidity in the hope of crushing the advanced Japanese detachments before they could be reinforced.

Now, however, the danger of the operation about to be undertaken apparently recurred to his mind. He was undertaking it against his better judgment. He therefore wrote—as, part of the same order—"In the event of your encountering superior strength, decisive action will be avoided, and in no case will you allow the whole of your reserves to become engaged until the conditions are entirely clear."

"The object of our southerly movement," he continues, "is the capture of the Chin-Chou (Nan-shan) position, and thereafter an advance on Port Arthur."

How was it possible for General Stakelberg to act with energy and rapidity if he was to avoid decisive action against superior forces? How was it possible for General Stakelberg to capture the Nan-shan Isthmus unless he was prepared to throw his last man and last round of ammunition into the effort?

The instructions were evidently written by a man acting against his better judgment—attempting to execute a plan of which he profoundly disapproved, and which he believed would prove disastrous. General Kuropatkin was—it seems beyond doubt—"riding for a fall." Would he not have displayed greater loyalty to his country—and to the army

under his command—if he had refused point-blank to carry out this mad scheme?

But these instructions were also evidently written by a man who was in a state of considerable nervous tension. What did the Japanese operations on the Mukden road, on the Liao-yang road, on the Hai-Cheng road (at Hsiu-yen), and on the coast at Kaiping mean? General Kuropatkin wished to know more about these before he finally committed himself to an advance down the railway line. He therefore ordered one division of General Stakelberg's corps to remain about Kaiping for the time being. Thus General Stakelberg's advance was stopped.

On the 10th June the Russian headquarters finally obtained fairly accurate information of the 1st Japanese Army. It was to the effect that the 12th Division was at Sai-ma-chi, the 2nd and Guard Divisions at Feng-huang-Cheng. But still no information as to the composition of the 4th Army!

Count Keller, who commanded the Russian Eastern force, believed—for some unknown reason—that the movements of the 1st and 4th Japanese Armies portended an advance on Hai-Cheng, the route that the Japanese had adopted in the war with China. Being a great advocate of the offensive, he decided to threaten the Japanese right at Sai-ma-chi. He therefore advanced towards that place on the 11th June with two regiments of infantry, but found that the Japanese had retreated. He therefore also retired. It seems possible that Count Keller had communicated his views as to a probable movement of the



1st and 4th Japanese Armies on Hai-Cheng to General Kuropatkin; for, on the 13th, he was ordered to send six battalions and a battery to that place. His force was thus considerably reduced.

It was only on the 11th that General Kuropatkin heard that the Japanese gunboats had withdrawn from Kaiping, and that the 4th Japanese Army had halted at Hsiu-yen and was entrenching itself. He now gave General Stakelberg leave to bring up a portion of his division at Kaiping; but the remainder of it was still to wait there until it could be relieved by other troops from Hai-Cheng; and these were to wait until they could be relieved by the troops from Count Keller's force, which left the neighbourhood of the Mo-tien-ling on the 13th.

But on the 13th General Stakelberg suddenly heard from his cavalry that 20,000 Japanese were advancing from Pu-lan-tien. He now despatched an urgent request to General Kuropatkin for permission to bring up the remainder of his troops.

During the previous few days the Japanese had made constant reconnaissances. Their intelligence department had estimated the Russian force at about two divisions, with three or four regiments of cavalry. On the 12th the Japanese supply trains had come up, and on the 13th the advance commenced. The army moved forward to within about six miles of Wa-fang-tien on this day: On the following day the army advanced to attack the Russians, who were some fourteen miles distant.

In the meantime the 4th Japanese Army at Hsiu-

yen had received orders to threaten the Russian left, and, if necessary, to march on Kaiping. In accordance with these instructions a detachment was despatched towards Kaiping, to occupy the mountain passes, on the 14th.

The exact position of the Russians was known to General Oku; and the orders directed the 3rd and 5th Divisions to attack the enemy in front, on both sides of the railway, and the 4th Division to make a detour to the west and turn the enemy's right. The cavalry was to operate on the right flank of the Japanese. Five battalions were held in reserve by General Oku.

#### BATTLE OF TELISSU, 14th and 15th JUNE, 1904.

General Stakelberg had already decided to abandon his offensive movement and await the Japanese advance. His troops were posted just in front of Telissu, astride the railway. There were five battalions and two batteries west of the railway; twelve battalions and four batteries east of the railway. A reserve of eight battalions and two batteries was posted at Telissu. The cavalry of nineteen squadrons, under General Samsonov,<sup>1</sup> was posted to cover the right flank. Three regiments of infantry, ten battalions, of the 1st Siberians, were still arriving by rail; and these were to be followed by troops of the 4th Siberians. At the actual battle the Russian strength was about 27,000 men, with ninety-six guns,

<sup>1</sup>Some reports say that General Samsonov had been relieved by General Simonov.

while the Japanese numbered some 37,000, with 216 guns.<sup>1</sup>

The country in the neighbourhood of Fu-chou is flat, but becomes hilly in the neighbourhood of Telissu. East of the railway the hills increase in height and gradually merge into the mountains of the Fen-shui-ling range. The heights east of the railway are bare and uncultivated; but the valleys are everywhere cultivated, and dotted with villages, each with its clump of trees. The crops consisted of Indian corn and *Kao-liang*, which served to limit the field of fire in the valleys. The Fu-chou River was, at this period, about 150 yards broad, and everywhere fordable. It will be noticed that the centre of the Russian position formed a salient, which was, for that reason, likely to be subjected to a converging fire. At this point, too, the crops, villages, and trees seriously limited the Russian field of fire. This, then, formed a dangerous point in the Russian line of defence. The Russians had not yet learnt by experience; their trenches were on the forward slopes of the hills, were without overhead cover, and were everywhere visible. No attempt had been made to conceal the guns or to employ indirect fire, in spite of the fact that General Stakelberg had recommended that form of action to his artillery commanders.

Shortly after 2 p.m. on the 14th June the action commenced with an artillery duel. During this duel

<sup>1</sup>The exact numbers of the Russians are still uncertain, as the *Russian Official History* of this period of the war has not yet been published. The Germans give the Russian numbers at 27,000 rifles, 2500 cavalry, and ninety-six guns.

the 3rd and 5th Japanese Divisions advanced to attack. The 5th Division contented itself with seizing the high ground overlooking the Fu-chou River on the right bank of it. A regiment of the 3rd Division seized the heights north-east of Wa-fang-wo-pu, and surprised with their fire the Russian reserve posted on height 560. This Japanese regiment was immediately attacked; but managed to hold its own until nightfall. This action appears to have led General Stakelberg to believe that his left flank would be enveloped. It is possible, however, that he received information which pointed to the same conclusion; but we must await the publication of the *Russian Official History* before the point can be cleared up. He, however, moved his reserve during the night to Tsui-chia-tun with a view to a counter-stroke on the enemy's right early on the following morning. Seven battalions arrived at Telissu by rail during the night, and these formed a fresh reserve.

At sunset the Japanese held a line through Ssu-chia-chou and Wang-chia-tun, with their cavalry (to which was attached a battalion of infantry) at Shapao-tzu. The 4th Division had arrived on the Fu-chou River on the road to Fu-chou city, its cavalry supported by infantry having expelled from that town a company of Russian infantry.

General Oku, hearing that the Russians were receiving reinforcements, determined to attack early on the following morning, and a regiment of the 5th Division, which formed part of the general reserve, was sent to rejoin its division. General Oku now

had only two battalions in reserve; but one battalion of the 6th Division was expected to arrive from the base. The 3rd Division was now to attack the enemy in front, the 5th was to turn his right, while the 4th Division was directed to send at least one brigade against the enemy's right flank to assist the 5th Division.

The infantry of the 5th commenced their advance shortly after midnight. There was a heavy mist in the early morning; and, when at 5.25 a.m. on the 15th, it cleared away and the guns opened fire, the Japanese infantry had got close to the Russian positions.

In the meantime the Russian counter-stroke, which was to have commenced not later than daybreak, had been delayed. The reserve, the brigade of the 17th corps, which had been despatched to Tsui-chia-tun was commanded by General Glasko; while the Russian troops in position east of the railway were under General Gerngross.

These two generals were ordered to co-operate in the counter-stroke; but the exact hour at which it should be delivered was left to the discretion of General Gerngross, who was to "come to an understanding on the subject" with General Glasko.

General Gerngross decided upon 4 a.m., but considered that it was incumbent on him to report his decision and obtain the approval of General Stakelberg, before taking action. He reported his decision accordingly, but, apparently, without ask-

ing for approval. Consequently, he got no reply; and, consequently, he did nothing.

In the meantime General Glasko had sent for orders to General Gerngross, but failing to obtain them had then applied to General Stakelberg. But General Stakelberg having placed General Gerngross in command, would not now interfere with his subordinate's plans. Hence, it was 6.40 a.m. when General Glasko finally decided to act on his own initiative and advance to the attack. As he was issuing his orders, he received an order from General Gerngross directing him to attack, and promising to support him; but, just as the troops moved off, he received another order, this time from General Stakelberg.

"If the Japanese advance with superior force against our centre or in any other direction, the corps will fall back slowly to Wan-chia-ling. In this case Major-General Glasko will hold the line Kou-chia-tun—Tsui-chia-tun as long as possible, in order to give the troops falling back by Telissu time to traverse the defile north of Tsui-chia-tun. Should the Japanese retire, the troops will halt, and await further orders."<sup>1</sup>

On receipt of this order General Glasko suspended his advance, and occupied the line Kou-chia-tun—Tsui-chia-tun. General Gerngross, however, knowing nothing of this order, and relying on General Glasko's assistance, advanced to the attack between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. with three regiments of infantry.

Though the Russian attack was pushed with great

<sup>1</sup> *British Official History of the Russo-Japanese War.*

determination, yet it progressed but slowly, owing to the lack of artillery support. Nevertheless, the 3rd Japanese Division was thrown on the defensive—holding on to rough shelter-trenches which it had constructed. The Russians attacked again and again, and “flung themselves against their obstinate opponents with the utmost intrepidity, and at one point the hostile lines approached so close to each other, that, when ammunition gave out, stones were freely thrown by both sides.” The situation of the 3rd Japanese Division became critical, especially in view of the fact that General Glasko had, on an order from the Headquarters Staff, again moved forward to support General Gerngross.

But, in the meantime, the battle had been won and lost elsewhere. The 5th Japanese Division, seeing the stern struggle in progress east of the railway, had crossed the Fu-chou River and vigorously attacked the Russian right. Almost immediately the Russian cavalry retreated,<sup>1</sup> exposing the right of the infantry. The five Russian battalions, with their two batteries, fought with the utmost gallantry against double their numbers of infantry supported by an overwhelming force of artillery. But, their right being turned, they gave back. The Japanese artillery, pushing across the river behind the 5th Division, quickly silenced the Russian batteries west

<sup>1</sup> It had retreated during the night to its position near Lung-Kou in consequence of an order from General Stakelberg which gave instructions *in case of retreat*, and which was misunderstood and taken to mean that the whole force was merely to fight a delaying action.

of the railway line, and also turned their attention to the Russian batteries east of the railway line. These last, brought under an enfilade fire, were quickly silenced.

At 9 a.m. a brigade of the 4th Japanese Division with a battalion of artillery and a squadron of cavalry having started at 6 a.m. and marched twelve miles, arrived at Yang-chia-tun; and, thence, moved up on the left of the 5th Division, directing its advance against Tung-lung-Kou. General Stakelberg, at 10.30 a.m., despatched an infantry regiment from his reserve at Telissu to restore the fight; but it could barely maintain its ground.

At 11 a.m. General Stakelberg received a report, which had been despatched by his cavalry at 6 a.m., to the effect that strong Japanese forces were advancing on Telissu from a south-westerly direction. He now, himself, took his last remaining reserve of four battalions to his right flank to restore the fight. But the attempt failed; and General Stakelberg, issuing an order for a general retreat, himself directed, with great skill, the retirement of his right.

In the meantime, to the east of the railway, the Russians had again been unfortunate.

At the very time that General Glasko was advancing to support General Gerngross, the latter was about to issue the order to retreat. The retreat of the Russians to the west of the river and railway had uncovered his right. His artillery had been quickly silenced; and, thereafter, his infantry had, for some two hours, been subjected to an enfilade



artillery and rifle fire from the direction of Ta-fang-shen. The regiment on his right was beginning to waver; and the Japanese were advancing against it across the river.

So about noon, General Gerngross, on his own initiative, gave the order to his division to retreat. And, at this very time, General Glasko's brigade was coming into action against the right flank of the 3rd Japanese Division about Wa-fang-wo-pu and Cheng-chia-tun. Its advance, was, however, checked by the Japanese cavalry brigade, which, at this juncture, vigorously attacked (dismounted) General Glasko's left flank. General Glasko, notwithstanding General Gerngross' retreat, continued his attempt to advance until, between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m., he received General Stakelberg's order to cover the retreat.

Meanwhile the 3rd Japanese Division had seized the high ground occupied by General Gerngross; and, bringing up their artillery, inflicted heavy losses on the Russians as they retreated up the railway line. But, on the whole, the Russians were extremely fortunate in their retirement. For the brigade of the Japanese 4th Division was on the point of seizing the railway line at Lung-tang-ho, when two Russian battalions, of the 4th Siberian Army Corps, arriving by rail from Kaiping, arrested its progress. A blinding storm of rain, moreover, blotted out the target from the view of the Japanese artillerymen. The Japanese infantry were also exhausted, while the ground east of the railway line was unsuited to cavalry action.

Thus the Russians escaped. Their losses are unknown. According to Russian accounts they lost about 500 killed, 2400 wounded, and 800 missing; but the Japanese claim to have buried 2000 Russians on the ground. The Russians also lost sixteen Q.F. guns.

The Japanese losses were 1137 men killed, wounded, and missing.

But the actual losses in men were comparatively immaterial compared with the moral gains and losses due to this battle. The Japanese troops were gaining a well-justified sense of invincibility; the generals were gaining confidence in their troops, and the troops in their generals.

Far otherwise must it have been with the Russians. The troops had fought with the utmost gallantry; and they were, nevertheless, beaten. How can we account for it? The Russian gunners could easily account for it. For General Stakelberg had urged on his artillery commanders the desirability of firing from covered positions. The majority of the artillery officers, however—"especially the senior officers"—disagreed; and, notwithstanding that many battery commanders supported General Stakelberg's views, they were over-ruled by their seniors. They had now, however, learnt their lesson; and, in the next battle, we shall see the Russians employ indirect fire with excellent results. But, in the meantime, what must the subordinate ranks of the Russian artillery have thought of their senior officers? The fatal idea must have entered into their minds that their leaders were behind the times.

Then there was the unfortunate misunderstanding with regard to the counter-stroke. Why did General Glasko leave General Gerngross in the lurch? He did not. He received contradictory orders. Then, why did not General Gerngross issue clear orders as to the time for the counter-stroke? The reason is obvious. He could not act on his own initiative, even when he was told to do so. We can only infer from this fact that initiative had not been favourably regarded in the Russian army in peace time. Some little friction—merely temporary, doubtless—between Generals Gerngross and Glasko probably resulted from this battle.

And what must these two have thought of General Stakelberg's orders? There was the extraordinary order which reached General Glasko just as he was about to attack, which told him clearly that his chief was contemplating, not a victory, but a retreat, and which warned him to hold himself in readiness to cover that retreat.

It must surely have appeared to these subordinate leaders that General Stakelberg had lost his nerve. But he had not. He was merely influenced by General Kuropatkin's orders. He was to act with energy and rapidity; he was to relieve Port Arthur, 130 miles distant; and yet he was not to fight seriously or use his reserves.

We should not be astonished to find that, as a result of this battle, General Stakelberg was losing faith in General Kuropatkin.

Now when generals lose faith in one another, and in their chiefs, the fact very quickly leaks out through their staffs to the troops. Some men take this side, some take that; and in place of loyal co-operation towards one object, the defeat of the enemy, there arise cliques with the inevitable friction and bickering, and jealousy and backbiting. An armed force in that state is like corn ripe for the sickle.

We can also imagine General Kuropatkin—who, after all, was a human being—saying to the Viceroy, “I told you so”; and was the Viceroy the man to admit that he was in the wrong? Would he not rather say, “If you had known how to carry out my instructions, this would not have occurred.” And, thereafter, would the friction between Viceroy and Army Commander increase or decrease? Would they succeed in reconciling—or would they try to reconcile—their conflicting ideas? The one, the chief who thought of two things, the “relief” of Port Arthur and the political situation in Russia; and the other, the subordinate, who thought of but one thing, the means by which he could ultimately defeat the hostile army. The one view, that of the chief, dictated an immediate offensive, and to give back not one foot of ground. The other view dictated a withdrawal and a gradual accumulation of force. The two ideas conflicted hopelessly; and an effort to combine them could only result in half-hearted measures and indecision. A remedy existed for this state of affairs; and there was yet time for it to prove effective.

There were three possible methods which General Kuropatkin might have adopted :

1. To sink his own opinions, discard his own plans, and merely obey the Viceroy's orders.
2. To disregard the Viceroy's orders, while pretending to obey them.
3. To refuse point-blank to obey the Viceroy's orders and refer the matter to the Czar.

The third of these was obviously the loyal—loyal to the Czar and country, that is—course to adopt, provided time was available in which the Czar could find and appoint a successor either to the Viceroy or the Commander of the Army. It is possible that General Kuropatkin adopted this course without effect; but there is reason to suppose that, from this time onward, he adopted the second method.

After their defeat at Telissu the Russians retreated to Kaiping. There was no pursuit; for the 2nd Japanese Army was obliged to halt in order to bring up ammunition, and owing to the heavy rain, which rendered the roads almost impassable. The Japanese cavalry alone was pushed forward, and occupied Wan-chia-ling. The Japanese have been criticised for their failure to pursue. Similar criticisms were levelled at the Germans in 1870. This failure to pursue appears to be a feature of modern war. There is always some difficulty in the way; either the lack of ammunition or of food, or the exhaustion of the troops, or the state of the roads, or that night has fallen, or that the cavalry is badly

placed for pursuit. But it is noticeable that the beaten side, notwithstanding that it has similar difficulties to overcome—the roads blocked or “impassable,” the troops exhausted and without food—nevertheless manages to retreat, and generally with considerable rapidity. The one side is actuated by enthusiasm, the other by fear; and the latter would seem to be by far the sharper spur. It is an important point; for there are many who maintain that troops require no other spur but enthusiasm, and that stringent discipline—which really means fear—is unnecessary.

The Japanese have also been criticised, not only for their failure to use their cavalry boldly in pursuit, but for their neglect to push it to the front to gain information. As regards the former criticism, we might point out that the Russian cavalry was vastly superior in numbers, and, perhaps, at this period, in efficiency, to the Japanese cavalry. General Stakelberg covered his retreat with a rearguard consisting of the bulk of his cavalry, supported by a brigade of infantry and a battery of horse artillery. There seems little reason to doubt that if the Japanese 1st Cavalry Brigade, unsupported, had pursued vigorously, it would have been very roughly handled. It was altogether too weak to hope to convert the Russian retreat into a rout.

As regards the second criticism, the Japanese evidently possessed—and this fact will become still more apparent as we go on—excellent information, which was furnished by its intelligence system.

Where, then, was the necessity to risk the destruction or defeat of their cavalry in order to obtain information which they already possessed? When an army lacks an efficient intelligence system, and therefore lacks information; or if its Commander-in-chief lacks the power of divination; or if its General Staff has not been properly trained; or, in future warfare, if it lacks aerial craft, then it must pay the penalty, and risk the defeat of its cavalry in sending it forward, perhaps to a great distance, as an isolated detachment. But if it possesses the necessary information, or if its Commander-in-chief possesses the power of divination and the courage to act on probabilities, what advantage is to be gained by accepting an unnecessary and very grave risk? Surely it is wiser to retain the cavalry, its strength unimpaired, for action at the decisive moment, that is, on the battlefield, where the whole available force is required if victory is to be won. The small force of Japanese cavalry exercised an important influence at Telissu by checking the Russian counter-stroke on the hard-pressed 3rd Division. It could certainly not have exercised that influence had its strength been impaired and its morale lowered by previous defeat.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE JAPANESE ADVANCE ON LIAO-YANG; THE BATTLE OF TA-SHIH-CHIAO; AND THE COMBATS OF HSI-MU-CHENG, YANG-TZU-LING, AND YU-SHULING.

AFTER the Battle of Telissu the general situation was as follows :

### *The Japanese.*

The 1st Army (General Kuroki) about Feng-huang-Cheng, with a detachment at Ai-yang-Cheng, about forty-five miles to the east-north-east, and a brigade of Guards detached to the 4th Army.

The 4th Army (General Kawamura) was about Hsiu-yen, with a detachment pushed out to the westward to assist the 2nd Army by a demonstration.

The 2nd Army (General Oku) halted for a few days about Telissu, with its cavalry brigade pushed forward to Wan-chia-ling. It was reinforced by the 6th Division; and advanced to Hsiung-yao-Cheng between the 19th and 21st June.

The 3rd Army (General Nogi) was pressing back the garrison of Port Arthur into the "Position of the Passes," and awaiting siege material, which reached it during July.



*The Russians.*

General Rennenkampf, with about 5000 cavalry and one battalion infantry, was on the Chyang-syong—Chiao-tou road at Sai-ma-chi, Colonel Madritov's detachment, which had been reinforced to a strength of eight squadrons and one infantry battalion, being posted on his left near Huai-jen-Hsien to watch the mountain roads from Korea to Mukden and Tieh-ling.

Count Keller, with a mixed force of about 25,000 men, was holding the mountain passes about the Mo-tien-ling and astride the road from Antung to Liao-yang. His cavalry, fourteen squadrons under General Grekov, was posted on his right flank about Huang-hua-tien, in touch with the Japanese outposts.

General Mishchenko, with nineteen squadrons, was in touch with the 4th Japanese Army, while his infantry, two battalions, were entrenching the passes about the Ta-ling Pass.

General Stakelberg was about Kaiping, with his cavalry forming a screen in front of him, and keeping touch with General Mishchenko's cavalry.

These were the advanced detachments. General Kuropatkin, with the reserve, was about Liao-yang, which place was being strongly fortified.

As an immediate result of the Battle of Telissu, and the threatening operations of the 4th Japanese Army, one division of General Stakelberg's force was hurried north to Ta-shih-chiao; Count Keller was ordered to send two additional regiments to Hai-

Cheng, and also to make demonstrations against the Japanese at Ai-yang-Cheng and Feng-huang-Cheng. The Russian Headquarters, exaggerating the strength of the 4th Japanese Army and the importance of its movements, was concentrating a powerful force about Hai-Cheng with a view to resisting its further progress.

It seems that the Russian Headquarters had accepted Count Keller's opinion that the 1st and 4th Japanese Armies would probably move to concentrate with the 2nd Army at Hai-Cheng; and Count Keller's demonstrations were intended to render the Japanese nervous for their right flank and to check their march to the westward.<sup>1</sup> From this time onward General Kuropatkin's leading idea would seem to have been to concentrate a powerful force at Hai-Cheng, with a view to striking at the 2nd Japanese Army if it came sufficiently far north, or at the heads of the columns of the 4th Army as they debouched from the mountains towards Hsi-mu-Cheng.

In the meantime Count Keller had been making preparations to carry out his demonstrations; and, after despatching the two regiments to the railway, and making provision for the defence of the passes over the main mountain range, he was able to collect

<sup>1</sup> These demonstrations were in accordance with the original plan by which the Yalu detachment, when forced to retire behind the Fen-shui-ling range, should constantly threaten the right flank and line of communication of the Japanese in their advance westward from Korea. Such demonstrations would certainly have proved most effective if the Japanese had really been engaged in a westerly movement from Korea. See chap. ii. p. 44.

only seven and a half battalions for his advance towards Feng-huang-Cheng. On the 17th June this force arrived within about ten miles of that place, having met with no opposition, and without even having seen any Japanese. His troops, who had covered forty miles in one and a half days over execrable roads, were exhausted. Count Keller, knowing that there might be about two Japanese divisions, or some twenty-four battalions, near Feng-huang-Cheng, apparently became, as was but natural, more anxious the further south he moved without finding the enemy he had expected to find. So he suddenly turned round and retreated. The Japanese gave no sign of their existence, and permitted him to escape unmolested. The Russians arrived at the mountain passes on the 18th, having made an eighty mile march for nothing. The return journey was evidently accomplished with great rapidity. Count Keller was now ordered to stand on the defensive, and cover the left flank of the Russian army.

Why did the Japanese permit him to escape?

On the next day, the 19th June, the Japanese heard that 5000 Russians were about to advance from Sai-ma-chi against the Japanese detachment at Ai-yang-Cheng. Their detachment at that place was immediately reinforced by one battalion from Feng-huang-Cheng, bringing up its strength to seven battalions, three squadrons, three batteries, and a company of engineers. These occupied a prepared position with two battalions and the artillery, one

battalion on outposts, and the remaining battalions with one squadron in reserve.

On the 22nd the Japanese detachment was attacked by General Rennenkampf with his 5000 cavalry. The Russians drove in the Japanese outposts, who retired without making any resistance. The Russians then attacked the main Japanese position, but were brought to a standstill by the Japanese fire at a distance of about 1000 yards. General Rennenkampf broke off the engagement, and retired to Sai-ma-chi, having, as he believed, located three Japanese regiments.

The Japanese, again, made no attempt to strike back, though they were in superior numbers. Our official history considers that, in both these cases, the Japanese desired to keep their numbers secret. This is, probably, the true explanation. Let us consider the result of these two demonstrations from the Russian point of view. Count Keller had moved with seven battalions to the neighbourhood of a Japanese force which had been estimated at twenty-four battalions. If the Japanese had indeed been in such strength at Feng-huang-Cheng, they certainly would not have lost so golden an opportunity of attacking so weak a Russian force. As they had failed to do so, the inference was that the two Japanese divisions were no longer at Feng-huang-Cheng. They had not moved to Ai-yang-Cheng on the Mukden road; for the Japanese force at that place had been so weak that it had not ventured to attack General Rennenkampf with his 5000 horse-

men. The Japanese had evidently moved to Hsiu-yen with a view to an advance on Hai-Cheng—the route they had taken in the war with China in 1894. Their object would be to form a junction with the 2nd Japanese Army, which had, as we have seen, commenced its advance from Telissu on the 19th June.

If the Japanese could succeed in thus hoodwinking the Russians, and diverting their attention to the railway line, they might succeed in capturing the mountain passes, near the Mo-tien-ling, without much difficulty; and that was the next objective of the 1st Japanese Army.

Such an achievement as this was worth far more to the Japanese than a victory against a small detachment of Russians, which was obviously executing a mere demonstration, and which would therefore be fully prepared for a rapid retreat. The victory could only be a partial one; but it would serve to disclose the positions and numbers of the Japanese, and therefore their probable plan of operations. If this be the true explanation, the self-restraint of the Japanese demands our admiration just as much as the tremendous courage and tenacity of purpose which they had already displayed.

On the 19th June the 4th Japanese Army received instructions from Imperial Headquarters: "Your main force will remain at Hsiu-yen, detaching troops to hold the passes leading to Hsi-mu-Cheng and Kai-ping. You will collect at least twenty days' supplies in the vicinity of Hsiu-yen, to be ready by the 5th

July."<sup>1</sup> On the 22nd June General Kuroki received somewhat similar orders. He was directed to collect twenty days' supply at Tung-yuen-pu,<sup>2</sup> to be ready by the 5th July; and to protect this depot with a detachment at Tsao-ho-Kou. These instructions, it will be seen, involved the capture of the passes over the Fen-shui-ling range by the 4th Army, and it seems probable that secret instructions were issued to the 1st Army to capture the passes in front of it when the Russian attention had been distracted by the 4th Army. These two armies appear, accordingly, to have decided to attack the passes in front of them on the 27th and 30th June, and to have informed the 2nd Army, which was expected to reach Kaiping on the 27th. The 2nd Army was, however, obliged to suspend its advance on the 21st June owing to supply and transport difficulties. Every available means of land transport was already being utilised. Captured rolling stock was, in default of engines, pushed along the railway line by gangs of thirty men to each truck; Chinese carts also worked to the front from the base at Pu-lan-tien. But these were insufficient, and it was decided to send a fleet of transports with supplies past Port Arthur to the coast at Hsiung-yao-Cheng. General Kuroki asked for and obtained authority for the 1st Army to advance on the 24th June.

Suddenly on the 23rd June the Russian fleet in Port Arthur made a sortie, the battleships, which

<sup>1</sup> *British Official History of the Russo-Japanese War.*

<sup>2</sup> See Map No. 7.

the Japanese believed to be incapacitated, reappearing.

Commander Semenoff is of opinion that the Japanese were fully aware of the Russian intention to make a sortie on the 23rd June. He asserts that preparations for it had commenced as early as the 18th June. "The greatest activity prevailed. . . ." "The fact that our squadron was to go to sea was an official secret, but all this animated scene proclaimed it aloud. Even a landsman was bound to notice it." ". . . Did 'they'<sup>1</sup> not know what was common knowledge in the squadron, in the port, in the town, in the fortress? Did 'they' not know that the Japanese were accurately and immediately informed of our every step, every movement? Did 'they' not know that the Japanese invariably had knowledge of the plans and intentions of our leaders, thanks to our 'bureaucratic' methods in treating secrets? Why, the Japanese were often better informed than we officers, who were reduced to guessing." The beaten nation, of course, invariably ascribes its defeat largely to hostile espionage. As a matter of fact it is open to question whether the beaten nation is not usually right in so doing.

At 8 a.m. on the 20th the order was issued to the Russian fleet to put to sea. It was published in the *Novi Kray*, the Port Arthur newspaper. At 10 a.m. the order was cancelled, and urgent efforts were made to recall the copies of it and confiscate the copies of the newspaper. Again at 9 p.m. on the 21st an

<sup>1</sup> "They" refers to the leaders and their staffs in the fortress.

order was issued that the fleet was to sail at 2.30 a.m. on the 22nd, but was again cancelled. At 2 a.m. on the 22nd Japanese destroyers appeared in the roads. At 2 p.m. a squadron of cruisers and destroyers hove in sight. The Russians swept the buoyed channel for mines, and to their astonishment found it clear.

On the night of the 22nd-23rd an action between destroyers took place outside the harbour.

At 4 a.m. on the 23rd the Russian fleet actually sailed. It passed through the buoyed channel, turned eastward, and anchored outside the mine-fields, in water which up to that date had been clear of mines. It found itself, however, in the midst of a new mine-field, the existence of which was only disclosed by some mines floating to the surface.

"These mines must have been laid," says Commander Semenoff, "yesterday or last night, for everything hereabouts was clear of mines until then. . . ." "Why precisely at the place where the squadron was to anchor? Did the Japanese by any chance know our most secret 'plan of anchorage'? Surely this could not be—yet the fact remained."

After clearing the mines, the Russian fleet laid its course for the open sea. It was watched by Japanese destroyers; then Japanese cruisers appeared; then the Japanese "main body hove in sight. . . ." "The Japanese were nearly complete. . . ." "They are all there, even the old "Chin-yen" had to turn out," the officers were remarking to each other. "This is the result of the way in which we keep our secrets.



During the last four days the Japanese have been able to recall the ships off Vladivostok. Now the fun will begin.'"

But it did not; the Russian fleet returned into harbour.

The 'Chin-yen' was the second-class battleship which had been captured from the Chinese in 1894. It had, in the first instance, formed part of the squadron which guarded the Straits of Korea; and its sudden appearance off Port Arthur led the Russians to believe that they had to deal with the whole Japanese fleet.

The strength of the respective fleets was :

Russians—six battleships, one armoured cruiser, four protected cruisers, seven destroyers.

Japanese—four battleships, one second-class battleship, five armoured cruisers, nine protected cruisers, and over thirty destroyers and torpedo boats.

But as an instrument of war the Russian fleet could now not possibly compare with the Japanese fleet; and, on the approach of the Japanese, the Russians put about and returned to harbour. The Russians anchored for the night in the roadstead, and were attacked throughout the night by Japanese torpedo flotillas. In the morning they entered the harbour, one of their battleships being towed in, a fact which by no means escaped the notice of the Japanese.

We now see that the Russian naval detachment at Vladivostok was practically thrown away. The Russians did not possess an intelligence system capable of telling them whether the bulk of the

Japanese fleet was in the Yellow Sea or in the Sea of Japan ; neither did their leaders possess the power to divine the operations of the Japanese fleet, or, apparently, the courage to act on probabilities. Neither was it possible to reinforce the Russian naval detachment at Vladivostok, and thereby convert a mere threat into a stern and unpleasant reality. The Japanese, on the other hand, knew exactly where each portion of the Russian fleet was to be found ; and their leaders either possessed a remarkable power of divination, or were admirably served by an excellent intelligence organisation, or both. As a result, the Russians, being in constant ignorance, were unable to utilise their detachment ; while the Japanese, possessing full knowledge, were able to utilise their interior lines to the best advantage.

It is said that Admiral Togo's operations on the 23rd June point to the fact that he did not desire to bring the Russian fleet to battle ; but that his main object was to save his armoured vessels, which he could not replace, for the contest with the Baltic fleet, and to keep the Port Arthur fleet in the harbour until the fortress, together with the fleet, should fall into the hands of the army. It is more than probable that Admiral Togo desired to save his armoured vessels ; but it does not therefore follow that he had no wish to bring the Russian fleet to battle. He was, surely, justified in believing that, if he could oblige the Russians to re-enter the harbour after dark, the mine-fields, combined with torpedo attack,

would be calculated to inflict serious losses on the Russians.

He would naturally seek to draw the Russians to such a distance from the fortress as would enable him to intercept their retreat and bring them, once for all, to a decisive battle; or, failing that, drive them back into Port Arthur through the mine-fields after dark. This appears to have been the course he adopted.

Even though the Russian fleet returned to harbour without venturing upon an engagement with the Japanese fleet, nevertheless the Imperial Japanese Headquarters displayed considerable perturbation of spirit. Such nervousness is, perhaps, comprehensible in view of the important losses suffered by the Japanese fleet during the preceding month, and that the Russians now possessed six battleships to the Japanese five, while four Japanese armoured cruisers and four protected cruisers were away, watching the Vladivostok squadron.

It must, nevertheless, have been evident to the Japanese that they had but little to fear from this Russian fleet. Yet the following is the order that the Japanese Imperial Headquarters issued to the armies on the 24th June:—"The fact has been proved that the Russian fleet is able to issue from the harbour of Port Arthur. The transport by sea of the provisions which will be required for the combined Manchurian Armies after their arrival at Liao-Yang is therefore rendered uncertain, and it is not advisable for the Second Army to advance

further north than Kaiping for the present. The battle of Liao-Yang, which it was anticipated would be fought before the rainy season, will now be postponed till after it. Arrange your operations accordingly.”<sup>1</sup>

There are one or two points in the above instructions which require particular notice.

It would have been foolhardy to push forward the 2nd Japanese Army to Kaiping, which was within easy striking distance of powerful Russian forces, before the 1st and 4th Armies had gained possession of the Mo-tien-ling and Fen-shui-ling Passes over the great mountain range. So long as the Russians held these passes, they could hold off the 1st and 4th Armies without much difficulty while they concentrated the bulk of their forces against the 2nd Army—provided the 2nd Army moved so far north as to give them their opportunity. The chief danger to be feared by the Japanese was lest one of their armies should be overwhelmed before the others could come to its assistance. Yet the Japanese Imperial Headquarters order suggested, if it did not direct, that the 2nd Army should advance immediately to Kaiping.

<sup>1</sup> *British Official History of the Russo-Japanese War*, Part ii. p. 99. This order was received by the 4th Army at 11 p.m. on the 24th, and by the 1st Army at 7 p.m. on the same date. The true rainy season apparently commences about the beginning of August; it actually commenced on the 5th August and lasted till the 20th. A heavy downpour of rain occurred between the 27th June and the 5th July which however, was not the true rainy season. Heavy rain also fell during the last week of August and the first days of September; but this, again, was not, apparently, the true rainy season.

This order practically cancelled the former order which directed that the 1st and 4th Armies should be in readiness to advance, and in possession of the mountain passes, by the 4th and 5th July. At the best it was a most ambiguous order, not at all the sort of thing one would expect from this highly trained and efficient Japanese staff; and the Japanese Commander-in-chief would have only himself to thank if his 1st and 4th Armies remained inactive, merely collecting supplies, while his 2nd Army pushed forward unsupported to Kaiping and was attacked by superior forces and defeated. It is true, however, that the Imperial Headquarters must have known perfectly well that the 2nd Army would be unable to advance to Kaiping for some time to come.

But a remarkable feature is that no notice was taken of this order by the 1st and 4th Armies. General Kuroki received it at 7 p.m. on the 24th. As, however, his advanced troops had already commenced to move he did not rescind his own orders; and his main bodies commenced their advance on the 26th. General Kawamura had issued his orders to the 4th Army at 4 p.m. on the 24th; and he received the Imperial Headquarter order at 11 p.m. on the same date. At the same time he was informed by the 2nd Army that its advance must be deferred, and that it was impossible to say when it could be resumed.

General Kawamura did not, however, cancel his orders; and his main body commenced its advance

on the 25th, the 2nd Army sending a small detachment to the north-east to gain touch with it.

It will be noticed that the three armies acted in co-operation; and it seems probable that this co-operation was due to some order from Imperial Headquarters of which we have no knowledge.

It was now considered too dangerous to send the transports with supplies for the 2nd Army so close to Port Arthur, inasmuch as the Japanese mercantile marine was limited, and the blocking operations at Port Arthur had already cost them numerous valuable vessels. It was therefore decided to send eighty hired Chinese junks past Port Arthur to Chin-Chou Bay. Supplies were to be landed by the transports at Talienwan, carried by cart across the isthmus, picked up by the junks in Chin-Chou Bay, and conveyed by sea to Hsiung-yao-Cheng.

So far as can be seen, this was the solitary point in which the Japanese were obliged to modify their plans by the Russian naval sortie of June 23rd.<sup>1</sup>

If the Japanese had really been afraid of further enterprises on the part of the Russian fleet in Port Arthur, in what fashion would they have acted? They would have established the closest possible blockade of the harbour; they would have made another desperate effort to seal the mouth of the harbour by sinking in it ballast-laden vessels, even though the last attempt had proved that the task

<sup>1</sup> It is said, however, that, in consequence of the sortie, the 2nd Japanese Army was unable to collect its twenty days' supplies until the 15th July instead of the 5th. Nevertheless, the 2nd Army, as will be seen, commenced its advance to Kaiping on the 6th July.

was almost impossible, and in spite of the fact that they could not afford to lose more merchant vessels ; or they would have endeavoured to seal the harbour by mine-fields ; and, finally, they would have reinforced their fleet off Port Arthur with one or two of their armoured cruisers which were engaged in guarding the Korean Straits and watching Vladivostok. But they did none of these. The blockade was, if anything, less rigorous than usual—almost as though they invited the Russians to come out again. They even permitted a Russian destroyer to carry despatches to and fro to Ying-Kou.

The over-sea transport of troops or of supplies does not appear to have been checked even for a day. The 1st Reserve Brigade<sup>1</sup> only completed its disembarkation at Dalny by the 23rd June, the day of the sortie. Between that date and the 26th July the following troops were landed at the same place within seventy miles of Port Arthur : the 9th Division, the 4th Reserve Brigade ;<sup>1</sup> seventy-two field guns and a large number of heavy siege guns, to say nothing of the supplies for the 2nd and 3rd Armies. Besides these, the 10th Reserve Brigade commenced to land at Ta-Ku-Shan on the 3rd July, and, finally, the Japanese Commander-in-chief was sent round to Kaiping by sea, sailing from Japan on the 6th July. Yet, all this time, the Russian fleet was in Port Arthur, able to issue from that fortress at will.

<sup>1</sup> The 1st and 4th Reserve, or *Kobi*, Brigades joined the 3rd Army for the siege of Port Arthur. The 10th Reserve Brigade joined the 10th Division and formed part of the 4th Army.

It will be seen that the actions of the Japanese by no means lend colour to the nervousness expressed in the Japanese Imperial Headquarter order of the 24th June.

Let us finally consider the action the Russians would probably have taken if copies of this nervous order had fallen into their hands. It seems probable that General Kuropatkin, recognising that his opportunity for a blow at the 2nd Japanese Army was about to arrive, would concentrate all available force at Hai-Cheng and Ta-shih-chiao, weakening his force on the Antung—Liao-yang road, if necessary. This he did, with unfortunate results.

And what effect would a copy of this order have had on the Viceroy, or on Admiral Vitgeft, or on General Stessel? It seems probable that Admiral Vitgeft would have taken his fleet to sea again as soon as possible in order to still further threaten, if not interrupt, the Japanese over-sea communications. Or, if Admiral Vitgeft did not act thus on his own initiative, it seems probable that he would receive a definite order from the Viceroy to put to sea—provided a message could get through to Port Arthur. This is exactly what happened.

We have seen that, after the sortie of the 23rd June, the Japanese naval blockade of Port Arthur was so slack that a Russian destroyer was able to carry despatches. It apparently made several voyages to Ying-Kou and back throughout July; and by means of it a lively correspondence was carried on between the Viceroy at Mukden and



Admiral Vitgeft. The messages were carried in the destroyer to Ying-Kou, from whence they were telegraphed to Mukden.<sup>1</sup>

The Viceroy was disappointed by the operations of the 23rd June, and ordered Admiral Vitgeft to render all possible assistance to the fortress by means of sorties, to remain in Port Arthur only so long as the squadron was in safety there, and, when the fortress was no longer a safe refuge, to make for Vladivostok, avoiding an action, if possible. Admiral Vitgeft immediately convened a council of war. With the exception of two members, the council was convinced that it would be fatal to put to sea, that the assistance of the fleet was of enormous advantage to the fortress, and that it should remain there with a view to assisting the Baltic fleet on its arrival in Far Eastern waters. This answer was sent to the Viceroy, who directed it to be reconsidered. The council of war

<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting to know whether these despatches were in cipher, and whether copies of them reached the hands of the Japanese, who assuredly had secret agents at Ying-Kou. It may not be out of place to tell a well-authenticated story of the war between China and Japan. Some eight or nine years before that war a Japanese trader arrived in the town and set up a small business. He was, however, a failure; the competition was too severe for him; there was never anything in his shop; but he nevertheless struggled on. He was well known to the English residents, who treated him with considerable kindness. On the outbreak of the war the Japanese resident disappeared. Ultimately Japanese troops marched into the town. The British residents were astounded at the perfect knowledge of the town displayed by the Japanese; detachments marched straight to bank, telegraph and post offices, water supply, etc., etc. Some of the British residents called on the Japanese Headquarters, and one of the first persons they met was their old friend, the Japanese trader, who was the chief interpreter of the Japanese army. On meeting them he laughed and said, "You know now who I am."

adhered to their former conclusions, upon which the Viceroy referred the matter to the Czar, who agreed with him. Nevertheless, the council refused to give way and "decided finally that the squadron must withstand the siege or perish in defence of Port Arthur." Hereupon the Viceroy reiterated his "inflexible determination" that the squadron must be taken out of Port Arthur, and that for it to be destroyed with the fortress would "leave an indelible stain on the flag of St. Andrew and on the honour of the fleet." This last message was received on the 7th August, and was followed by a sortie on the 10th, on which date the Russian fleet was brought to battle.<sup>1</sup>

It will, perhaps, be admitted that it was to the Japanese interest :

- (1) To bring the Russian fleet to battle at as early a date as possible.
- (2) To obtain possession of the mountain passes with the 1st and 4th Armies before permitting the 2nd Army to advance to within striking distance of the Russians.
- (3) To obtain possession of the passes without loss.

By what means would they seek to achieve these results ?

- (1) By inducing the Viceroy and the Russian admiral to believe that they were afraid of the Russian fleet.
- (2) By making the blockade less stringent.

<sup>1</sup>It is to be noted that, in spite of their fear of the Russian fleet, the Japanese fleet had not been reinforced by the 10th August, though they must have known that a second sortie was imminent. See p. 317.

(3) By permitting communication between the Viceroy and Port Arthur.

(4) By leading General Kuropatkin to believe :

(a) that the 2nd Japanese Army would advance to within striking distance of him ;

(b) that the other two armies could not advance to its support.

By that means he might be induced to strengthen his forces on the railway and weaken those holding the mountain passes.

We are, perhaps, justified in thinking that the Japanese Imperial Headquarter order of the 24th June was intended for Russian consumption ; and that other, and secret, instructions were issued to Admiral Togo and to the army commanders. It seems probable, moreover, that a copy of this order fell into the hands of the Russians and was largely responsible for their misfortunes. It is even questionable whether the order issued to the Japanese armies to be in readiness to move on the 5th July was not intended to reach the Russians—it was calculated to lull them into a false sense of security, and as we have seen, the movement of the 1st and 4th Armies commenced on the 25th and 26th June. These orders, together with the inaction of the Japanese at the time of Count Keller's reconnaissances, point to an attempt to induce the Russians to believe that the Japanese intended to concentrate on Hai-Cheng by the routes adopted in the war with

China, and thereby to cause General Kuropatkin to weaken his hold on the Mo-tien-ling Passes.

The point for us to consider is whether the Japanese were informed of the projected naval sortie of the 23rd June, took their measures to catch the Russian fleet, and to prepare their headquarter order for Russian consumption. If so, what was the nature of the organisation and of the staff work which enabled this mystification of the enemy to be successfully accomplished?

In the meantime, on the 26th June, the Japanese 3rd Army drove in the Russian advanced detachments which were posted in front of the "Position of the Passes" at Port Arthur. They captured Chien Shan; and, generally, occupied a line within 1000 to 3000 yards of the Russian positions.

The Russian ships of war, creeping along shore inside the mine-fields, afforded considerable assistance to their troops. But, in losing Chien Shan, the Russians had lost an important post of observation.

With the field armies, the movements that occurred were as follows: On the 26th June another regiment of infantry was withdrawn from Count Keller and despatched to Hai-Cheng, at which place General Kuropatkin himself arrived on this day. General Kuropatkin states: "Believing that Hai-cheng constituted our greatest danger, as the enemy might, if they gained a success there, cut off Stakelberg's force close by, on the 29th I concentrated forty-one battalions and eighteen *sotnias*<sup>1</sup> under Sasulitch at

<sup>1</sup>The Russian equivalent to a squadron of cavalry.

Hsi-mu-Cheng, intending with them to hurl back the enemy on to their Hai-Cheng line of advance." <sup>1</sup>

The 4th Japanese Army, which still consisted of the 10th Division with a brigade of the Guard Division attached, <sup>2</sup> commenced its advance to attack Ta-ling Passes on the 25th June.

According to the Japanese information, the Russian force opposed to them was holding the Ta-ling Passes on a front of twenty miles, and consisted of twenty-four squadrons of cavalry, ten battalions of infantry, and one horse artillery battery. <sup>3</sup>

The Japanese force was divided into four columns, with a general reserve. These advanced on the 26th by different routes so as to be in position to press home the attack on the 27th. Communication between the various columns in the mountainous country was extremely difficult. <sup>4</sup>

At the same time the 2nd Army pushed out a detachment to the north-east to demonstrate against the flank of the Russians opposed to the 4th Army, while its cavalry commenced to display activity against the Russians at Kaiping.

On the 27th the attack was delivered, and was entirely successful, the Japanese losing only 200 men

<sup>1</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. ii. p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> The 10th *Kobi* Brigade, which afterwards joined the 4th Army, commenced to land at Ta-Ku-Shan on the 3rd July.

<sup>3</sup> Accounts differ as to the strength of the Russians.

<sup>4</sup> The mountains at these passes run up to a height of 2000 to 2500 feet, and are rugged, precipitous, and in places heavily wooded.

in killed and wounded, and the Russians retreating to Hsi-mu-Cheng. Whether or no General Kuropatkin intended to hold these passes is not entirely clear. There is reason to suppose that his idea was to strike at the heads of the Japanese columns as they attempted to debouch from the mountain defiles. It was, apparently, with this object that he was concentrating so powerful a force at Hai-Cheng and Hsi-mu-Cheng. General Kuropatkin's attention had, it will be seen, been attracted to the direction of Hai-Cheng and Hsi-mu-Cheng, with the result that he had reduced Count Keller's forces at the Mo-tien-ling to about eleven battalions. For some unexplained reason,<sup>1</sup> Count Keller's troops evacuated the mountain passes at the Mo-tien-ling. It was unfortunate; for the 1st Japanese Army, which had commenced its advance on the 26th June, suddenly seized the Mo-tien-ling, and the passes to east and west of it, without firing a shot, on the 30th June. The Japanese detachment on the Mukden road also advanced to Sai-ma-chi and a short distance beyond that place; but did not attack Rennenkampf's troops, who were holding the mountain passes at Pa-la-ling. Thus the Japanese had cleverly gained possession of the Mo-tien-ling Passes without loss.

The time had now arrived to move up the 2nd Japanese Army, to bring it into touch with the 4th Army, and to gain possession of Ying-Kou as a fresh base of operations. The movement commenced

<sup>1</sup> The *Russian Official History* dealing with the period has not yet been published.

on the 6th July, the date which had originally been fixed by the Imperial Headquarter order of the 19th June, for the combined advance of the three armies.

But, in the meantime, the 1st Army had been put to it to maintain its position. Floods of rain fell between the 27th June and 5th July. "Rivers overflowed their banks, roads became morasses, and the Chinese carters, whose services had been secured with so much pains, fled in every direction to their homes." The transport of supplies broke down; the troops were placed on half rations; the detachment on the Mukden road was obliged to retire to Sai-ma-chi, leaving a line of outposts in its former position; and, if the rain had continued for another forty-eight hours, the whole army must have retreated to Feng-huang-Cheng.

On the 4th July two or three Russian battalions attacked the advanced Japanese detachments holding the Mo-tien-ling and neighbouring passes. The attack was, according to the Russian accounts, delivered merely with the object of obtaining information, and was repulsed without much difficulty.

The necessity for obtaining information was due to the conflicting intelligence which had reached the Russian Headquarters. On the one hand there were rumours of a general westward movement of the 1st Japanese Army towards the railway, and, on the other, there were rumours of a projected forward movement of the 1st Japanese Army against the Russian left flank.

Between the 3rd and 5th July the garrison of

Port Arthur made a sortie on land with the object of recovering Chien Shan, which had been lost on the 26th June. But the Japanese were strongly entrenched; and, in spite of the great bravery displayed by the Russian troops, the sortie failed.

On the 6th July the 2nd Japanese Army commenced its advance on Kaiping, warning the 4th Army that the Russians who were holding the hills a short distance north of that place would be attacked on the 9th or 11th. On the same date, the 6th, Marshal Oyama left Japan for Kaiping, at which place he intended to establish his headquarters.<sup>1</sup> On the 6th and 7th the 2nd Japanese Army, consisting of the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th Divisions, with the 1st Cavalry and 1st Artillery Brigades, drove in the Russian advanced troops, which were holding a line about eight miles south of Kaiping. According to the reports of the inhabitants, some 32,000 Russians were holding the semicircle of hills which rise immediately to the north of Kaiping, while stronger forces, which were continually receiving reinforcements from Liao-yang, were posted about Ta-shih-chiao.

On the 8th the Russians north of Kaiping were reconnoitred, and on the 9th they were attacked. But the Russians, who were a mere rearguard of one division, retreated, and again showed front about five miles back. The 2nd Army now halted until the

<sup>1</sup> Here was a notable case of counting chickens before they were hatched. The Japanese were as confident of victory as was Napoleon two days before Jena.



22nd, holding an entrenched line some four miles north of the city.

In the meantime the 4th Army had, with a view to assisting the 2nd, sent detachments towards the railway, aiming at a point about ten miles north of Kaiping. These detachments got across the mountains on the 10th only, and finding that Kaiping was already in the hands of the Japanese, rejoined their army. Another detachment marched on Hsi-mu-Cheng, but finding the Russians at that place in force, returned without engaging them. But for this threatening attitude of the 4th Army the Russians would probably have attempted a blow at the 2nd Army.

But the Russian General Staff had formed a remarkably exaggerated estimate of the strength of the Japanese forces in the field. It was only after the outbreak of hostilities that they had discovered that the Japanese territorial army was organised and prepared to take part in over-sea operations; and they now arrived at the conclusion that the bulk of these reserve troops were in front of them. They estimated the 1st Japanese Army at seventy-nine battalions (including first line, reserve, and line of communication troops), eighteen squadrons, and 252 guns, besides 4000 Korean troops, whereas the actual strength was thirty-three battalions, nine squadrons, and 120 guns. They estimated the 4th Army at forty-four battalions, three squadrons, and 120 guns; whereas it actually consisted of nineteen battalions, three squadrons, and thirty-six guns.

They estimated the 2nd Army at seventy-two battalions, twenty-six squadrons, and 252 guns ; whereas it actually consisted of fifty-one battalions, twenty squadrons, and 258 guns. They estimated the 3rd Army, engaged in the siege of Port Arthur, at 100 battalions, three squadrons, and 204 guns, exclusive of siege guns ; whereas it actually consisted of forty-two battalions, with, however, a powerful force of artillery.<sup>1</sup>

The Russian forces were, at this period, the middle of July, divided into two main groups.

The southern group consisted of the 1st, 4th, and 2nd Siberian Corps, together with General Mishchenko's cavalry. The 1st and 4th Siberians were posted in an entrenched position astride the railway, covering the junction of the railway to Ying-Kou, at which latter place was posted a small detachment. These two corps numbered 31,000 rifles, about 4000 sabres and 106 guns. General Mishchenko's cavalry, consisting of nineteen squadrons, two battalions, and ten guns, was posted in advance of the left flank of the 4th Siberians.

The bulk of the 2nd Siberians, reinforced by a brigade of the 10th Corps and a regiment of the 3rd Siberians, were posted at Hsi-mu-Cheng, about a day's march to the north-east of the 4th Siberians, and facing the mountain passes in the direction of Hsiu-yen. These numbered 23,400 rifles, 1200 sabres, and 72 guns.

<sup>1</sup>The actual numbers of the Japanese is not known ; but a rough estimate would give : 1st Army, about 36,000 men ; 4th Army, about 22,000 men ; 2nd Army, about 60,000 men ; 3rd Army (at Port Arthur), about 50,000 men.

In reserve at Hai-Cheng was posted a brigade of the 17th Corps, which was now arriving from Harbin, with cavalry and artillery, numbering about 17,000 men.

The eastern group consisted of the 3rd Siberians, the bulk of the 10th Corps, and numbered 22,000 rifles, 2400 sabres, and 84 guns. It was posted astride the road from Liao-yang to Feng-huang-Cheng, facing the Mo-tien-ling Passes.

A detachment, consisting of a brigade of the 10th Corps, with artillery and cavalry, numbering 5400 rifles, 600 sabres, and 45 guns, was posted at Chiao-tou, on the road from Pen-hsi-hu to Sai-ma-chi.

General Grekov's cavalry (fourteen squadrons) was posted about halfway between the eastern group and the 2nd Siberians.

General Rennenkampf's detachment, consisting of one battalion (of the 2nd Siberians), twelve squadrons, and six guns, covered the left flank of the army, extending eastward from Pen-hsi-hu. Its line was carried on as far as Huai-jen-Hsien by Colonel Madritov's detachment, which consisted of one battalion and eight squadrons.

In addition, garrisons were posted : Five battalions, eight squadrons, and thirty guns at Liao-yang ; one battalion and two guns at Yen-tai mines ;<sup>1</sup> four battalions and four squadrons at Mukden ; and one battalion, eight squadrons, and four guns at Ta-wan on the Liao Ho.

The total strength of the Russian army at this

<sup>1</sup> At the terminus of the branch railway, about seventeen miles north-east of Liao-yang. At this point supplies and forage had been collected.

period, as given by the Russian official history, numbered 199,502 men, of which only 134,189 were combatant troops; while, according to the Russian estimate of that time, the Japanese had 120,000 rifles, 5500 sabres, and 576 guns in first line, with, probably, 50,000 rifles and 84 guns in second line.

Admiral Alexiev, the Viceroy, was still deeply concerned for the fate of Port Arthur, and had never ceased urging General Kuropatkin to adopt energetic measures for its relief. He still maintained that the Russian army should utilise the "interior lines"—concentrate against the 1st Japanese Army, and, having forced it back on Korea, turn against the 2nd Japanese Army, and then move on Port Arthur.

General Kuropatkin, on the other hand, was equally firm in his determination to avoid a decisive battle until he should be so strong as to render a Russian victory probable. He again drew attention to the fact that Port Arthur was sufficiently garrisoned and provisioned,<sup>1</sup> and should be able to hold out for a year; also that the Japanese had, evidently, according to his prognostications, brought up the bulk of their forces against the Russian field army. In the meantime, in his opinion, the positions of the Russian forces left much to be desired. They were separated, practically, in three groups, each one having in front of it superior hostile forces. Supposing, he argued, the Japanese again attacked and proved victorious either

<sup>1</sup>It appears that supplies for a year for the increased garrison had been accumulated in Port Arthur after the outbreak of hostilities and before the fortress was isolated.

on the Feng-huang-Cheng—Liao-yang road, or on the Hsiu-yen—Hai-Cheng road, the 1st and 4th Siberians would be cut off. Hence he determined, in case of a Japanese advance, to withdraw these two corps to Hai-Cheng, evacuating Ying-Kou and the railway junction at Ta-shih-chiao. He recognised that the loss of these two points would be very disadvantageous; but, on the other hand, the army would be in a better position to take advantage of the separation between the 1st and 2nd Japanese Armies, and the country around Hai-Cheng would enable it to utilise its superiority in cavalry. Moreover, by withdrawing, the Japanese field armies would also be drawn further from Port Arthur, and, if defeated, their defeat would prove more decisive. A withdrawal would also avoid a decisive battle until after the arrival of the whole of the 17th Corps.

The Viceroy maintained that the Russian estimate of the Japanese forces was exaggerated; that the Russian troops on the railway were quite strong enough to hold entrenched positions against the 2nd and 4th Japanese Armies; and that the 1st Japanese Army, which threatened Liao-yang, "the key of our strategic position," should be attacked and driven back on Korea. He considered that this attack should be delivered without awaiting the arrival of the whole of the 17th Corps.

At this period, the middle of July, persistent reports were received which tended to strengthen the Viceroy's views. The Japanese were reported to

have suffered severe losses during the assaults on the Russian advanced troops in front of the "Position of the Passes" at Port Arthur, which occurred on the 26th June; and it was thought possible that a portion of the 2nd Army had been sent to reinforce the army besieging Port Arthur. A Japanese transport which had been destroyed by the Vladivostok cruisers was also said to have had siege artillery on board; and it was reported that the Artillery Brigade, with the 2nd Japanese Army, had been sent to Port Arthur instead of it. A report was also received that 32,000 Japanese reserve troops had left Japan with Marshal Oyama, and were destined to land at Ying-Kou.<sup>1</sup>

"A Japanese spy, interpreter to the General Staff of Oku's army,"<sup>2</sup> announced that by a new organisation, which was shortly to be introduced, each brigade was to consist of four instead of two regiments, and that, consequently, each division would number 60,000 instead of 30,000 men. The Russian General Staff declined to believe this last piece of information; nevertheless all these various items served to confirm the Viceroy in his view that the time had arrived for a Russian offensive.

General Kuropatkin, however, still considered that an offensive against the 1st Japanese Army should be part of a combined offensive movement; and that such a movement could not take place until after

<sup>1</sup> If, as seems likely, these reports emanated from the Japanese, it is probable that they were designed to induce the Russian fleet to come out of Port Arthur.

<sup>2</sup> *Russian Official History.*

the rains, in the middle of August, when the army had been reinforced, at the very least, by the 1st European and the 5th Siberian Corps.<sup>1</sup> As, however, these two corps could not arrive until the beginning of September, it was evident that General Kuropatkin's offensive movement could not take place during August. General Kuropatkin, however, in order to satisfy the Viceroy, decided to assume a partial offensive with Count Keller's forces while giving instructions to the troops on the railway to retire if attacked. This would result, according to the *Russian Official History* in the retreat of ninety-seven Russian battalions of the Southern group before the advance of the 2nd and 4th Japanese Armies estimated at ninety battalions; while the thirty-six Russian battalions under Count Keller attacked the 1st Japanese Army, estimated at seventy-two to eighty battalions! The result of a dual control!

General Kuropatkin himself states: "Taking into consideration the considerable increase of the Eastern Force, I ordered Count Keller to take the offensive, so as to again get possession of the passes. He did so, but although he had forty battalions under his command, he advanced with only twenty-four."<sup>2</sup>

Count Keller, with twenty-four battalions, attacked on the early morning of July 17th in three columns. Fourteen battalions in one column were directed on the main pass, three battalions in the left column,

<sup>1</sup> He considered that, in addition to these, two more European corps were required before a general offensive could be undertaken.

<sup>2</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. ii. p. 221.

and one battalion in the right column; the remainder was, apparently, in reserve. Severe fighting ensued; but the attack was everywhere repulsed. The heavy column of fourteen battalions suffered severely in the defiles. It is interesting to compare the Russian method of attacking mountain passes with that of the Japanese. The latter employed numerous small columns, each of which sought to force its way over the mountains, and to co-operate with the columns to right and left by enveloping the flanks of the defenders. It is also interesting to compare the Russian methods on this occasion with their attack at Inkerman.

The Russians had been opposed by the 2nd Japanese Division alone, numbering twelve battalions only. On hearing of this repulse General Kuropatkin directed Count Keller to "defend energetically" his entrenched positions in the neighbourhood of Ta-wan astride the road from Feng-huang-Cheng to Liao-yang. He attached great importance to the retention of this position, inasmuch as if it fell into Japanese hands Chiao-tou must be evacuated; and the possession of Chiao-tou would enable the Japanese to prepare secretly for an advance in force against the Russian communications with Mukden.

But on the day after the Russian attack on the Mo-tien-ling the 12th Japanese Division assumed the offensive along the Mukden road, and advanced to the neighbourhood of Chiao-tou. Japanese reconnoitring detachments had already been pushed forward; and this village was known to be held by



the Russians. It was an important point, inasmuch as it was the junction of the roads to Liao-yang, and, by Pen-hsi-hu, to Mukden. It was also at the head of a defile.

General Rennenkampf had been wounded in a skirmish on the 13th July near Chiao-tou with one of the Japanese reconnoitring detachments; and the command of the Russian cavalry in this quarter had devolved upon General Liubavin. He had withdrawn the cavalry to Hsiao-hsi-erh, some twenty-five miles east of Chiao-tou, where he covered the Russian extreme left flank, and kept touch with Colonel Madritov's cavalry detachment. There was a road which ran from Mukden to the eastward for fifty miles, and thence turned to the south-east, through the mountains, past the sources of the Tai-tzu River, to Huai-jen-Hsien, and thence across the Yalu to the north-eastern territory of Korea. Colonel Madritov was watching this road; for there was the possibility that Japanese forces, landing at Gensan, and moving by this road, might strike at the solitary line of communication of the Russian army. It must not be forgotten that the integrity of this railway was vital to the very existence of the Russian army; that both Admiral Alexiev and General Kuropatkin were, consequently, extremely solicitous for its safety; and that these were facts which were either well known to the Japanese or could easily be inferred by them.

Chiao-tou was held by a brigade of infantry of the 10th Corps (seven battalions), a regiment of cavalry, and thirty-nine guns.

On the afternoon of the 18th, and on the 19th, this detachment was attacked by the 12th Division and a small detachment of the 2nd Division, and driven from the village and defile, retreating along the road to Liao-yang. General Liubavin apparently made no attempt to assist the brigade of the 10th Corps.

The results of this action were that the extreme Japanese right, the 12th Division, was brought up into line with the remainder of the 1st Army, and that it was also in a position to directly threaten the Russian railway between Liao-yang and Mukden by way of Pen-hsi-hu. But the Russians had already posted a garrison at Pen-hsi-hu to cover their flank and line of communication, as well as to give warning of a Japanese advance in that direction, and General Liubavin now retired to Pei-ling-pu-tzu and San-chia-tzu to watch the river line. General Kuropatkin was, however, deeply concerned at the loss of Chiao-tou. He ordered the 10th Corps to make preparations to recapture the place; and, at the same time, impressed on Count Keller the necessity of holding firmly to his positions at Ta-wan.

In the meantime the difference of opinion between the Viceroy and General Kuropatkin had been referred to the Czar, who recommended the adoption of General Kuropatkin's plans, but who concluded his telegram to the Viceroy as follows: "In making you acquainted with my views, I do not wish to sway your decisions which are your prerogative as Commander-in-chief."

Admiral Alexiev, however, was by no means content to give way to General Kuropatkin; and in order, apparently, that this conflict of ideas should not recur, he now began to consider the advisability of forming, on the arrival of reinforcements, two armies, of which he should hold the supreme command, while General Kuropatkin would become a mere army commander. The Viceroy's chief of the staff, General Jilinski, now drew up a memorandum. He estimated the Japanese forces :

1st Army—3 Divisions and 2 Reserve Brigades, or 52 battalions.

4th Army—3 Divisions and 1 Reserve Brigade, or 44 battalions.

2nd Army—3 or 4 Divisions and 2 Reserve Brigades, or 52 to 64 battalions.

Total, 148 to 160 battalions.

It will be seen that his estimate of the Japanese forces was far more accurate than that of General Kuropatkin's staff.

He considered that the Japanese positions indicated that their object was to capture Port Arthur and to prevent the succour of that fortress by the Russian field army. He was not clear, however, whether the three Japanese armies intended to advance concentrically on Liao-yang or to stand on the defensive. At the end of July, after the arrival of the 17th corps, the Russian army would consist of 165 battalions, 137 squadrons, six sapper battalions, and 536 guns. It could operate in one of three ways :

1. Attack successively the separated groups of the Japanese forces, commencing with Kuroki's army.
2. Retreat and concentrate about Hai-Cheng or Liao-yang in order to accept battle near one of these places.
3. Retreat on Tieh-ling in order to oblige the Japanese to extend their line of communication, and so weaken them.

In any case, the object would be to win a victory over the Japanese armies, and then march to deliver Port Arthur and invade Korea.

The Viceroy noted on this memorandum that he had finally decided to beat and pursue Kuroki's army, and then to march south to deliver Port Arthur. The Viceroy also formulated a plan for the time when the 5th and 6th Siberians and the 1st European Corps should have arrived. One of these corps was to be sent to Vladivostok to reinforce the garrison of that fortress, and, if a favourable opportunity arose, to undertake offensive operations along the coast into Korea. The other two corps were to be brought up to the main army and two armies were to be formed. Now, for the first time, the Viceroy expressed a doubt whether the army of Manchuria would succeed in relieving Port Arthur, and he warned the Minister of War that, in case of the fall of Port Arthur and the release of the 3rd Japanese Army, two more Russian corps would be required in Manchuria.

On the 20th July,<sup>1</sup> at the same time that the above plans were telegraphed to the Minister of War, General Kuropatkin interviewed the Viceroy at Mukden. At the conference which ensued, it was finally decided that the Eastern group should be reinforced by the 10th and portions of the 17th Corps, bringing the force up to sixty-four battalions, twenty-nine squadrons, and 247 guns; and, under the personal command of General Kuropatkin, assume the offensive against the 1st Japanese Army.

General Kuropatkin writes: "With the above dispositions of the opposing forces, we should, according to the theory of the art of war, have been able to operate on 'Interior lines.' But for us this was extremely difficult, as, in the first place, we had not enough men to attain the necessary superiority over any one of the hostile groups without laying ourselves open to defeat by the other two, and, in the second, the rains had so seriously damaged the roads as to prevent the rapid movement (as we had heavy guns and baggage) necessary for successful action even on interior lines. Finally, as their bases (Korea, Ta-Ku-Shan, Pi-tzu-wo) were enveloping, it was possible for each of their groups to refuse an unequal battle, and fall back without exposing its communications. Still, notwithstanding these unfavourable conditions, it was proposed to attack Kuroki, who menaced our communications most, at the earliest favourable moment."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These plans were also telegraphed direct to the Minister of War by General Jilinski, chief of the Viceroy's staff, on the 16th July.

<sup>2</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. ii. p. 223.

General Kuropatkin returned to Liao-yang on the 21st and openly expressed his intention to assume the offensive. He then busied himself with preparations for the concentration of his troops. But, on the 22nd, the Japanese Guard Brigade, which had been attached to the 4th Army, marched to rejoin the 1st Army.

Orders for the movement of troops of the 10th and 17th Corps to join the Eastern group were issued on the 22nd July ; and, on the 23rd, General Kuropatkin himself joined the eastern group. " But on July 23rd," writes General Kuropatkin, " when I inspected the 10th Corps, I found that it was absolutely incapable of operating in hills, as it had no pack animals. In fact, those companies on outpost duty on steep or high ground had actually to remain all day without food or water. As the units of the 17th Corps were in a similar condition, it was impossible even to think of at once assuming the offensive." <sup>1</sup>

#### THE BATTLE OF TA-SHIH-CHIAO, 24th JULY, 1904.

In the meantime the 2nd Japanese Army was already in readiness to advance against the Russians at Ta-shih-chiao ; and its movement commenced during the night of the 22nd-23rd July. Its four divisions advanced in one general line on a front of twelve miles, with its cavalry brigade covering the left flank. It halted on the night of the 23rd about five miles short of the Russian position. Staff officers had been sent forward in the morning to reconnoitre ;

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 224.

and they reported that the front of the position extended about ten miles, and they also located the positions of redoubts and obstacles. The infantry trenches were clearly to be seen. They entirely failed, however, to locate the gun positions—the Russians had learnt a lesson at Telissu.

It was on this very date, according to our official history, that General Kuropatkin was informed by General Mishchenko that the 4th Japanese Army was advancing. As a matter of fact, the 4th Army did not advance until the next day, the 24th, and then it advanced very slowly, its object being, not to attack the Russians at Hsi-mu-Cheng, but merely to threaten such an attack, and so render General Kuropatkin nervous for the line of retreat of his force at Ta-shih-chiao. Again, we must notice that it was entirely to the advantage of the Japanese that the Russians should obtain premature information of this movement; and, in this connection, we must not forget that General Kuropatkin exaggerated the strength of the 4th Army.

The Russian force in position at Ta-shih-chiao consisted of the 1st and 4th Siberian Army Corps, or forty-five battalions, fifty-four squadrons, and 122 guns. The 1st Corps was commanded by General Stakelberg, the 4th by General Zarubaiev, the latter of whom was also in command of the whole force. Twelve battalions and ninety-six guns of the 17th Corps had been brought up to Ta-shih-chiao railway station as reserve, thus increasing the Russian force to fifty-seven battalions, fifty-four

squadrons, and 218 guns. There were also eight battalions and twenty-four guns of the 17th Corps at Hai-Cheng which could be called on if necessary.

The exact numbers of the Russians are not known; but, as the battalions were under strength, they probably amounted to 36,000 infantry and 5000 to 6000 cavalry.

The 2nd Japanese Army consisted of forty-eight battalions, twenty squadrons, and 258 guns, a combatant strength of 60,000 men, of whom 46,000 were infantry. Ta-shih-chiao is the junction of the branch railway line to Newchuang with the main line; and it was partly with a view to covering this junction that General Zarubaiev had been directed to fortify and hold his position. That position was some five miles south of the junction. The right rested on the railway; the left was on the Tung-ta River, about twelve miles to the eastward. The position had been carefully selected and fortified under the direction of General Kuropatkin himself. The right of it was posted in low, flat ground, which was covered with various crops. The *Kao-liang*, which at this period of the year was growing to a height of six to seven feet had been cut in the immediate front of the position, thus giving a clear field of fire of about 1500 yards. Certain isolated hills afforded admirable points of observation. The left of the position was quite different in character. It was posted in hilly ground, very broken, and intersected by numerous ravines. The line which had been fortified ran as shown on the



map AAA; but when this position came to be occupied, it was discovered that the left of it was completely dominated by the high ground at Nantaling, and would quickly be rendered untenable by hostile artillery. The left was therefore thrown forward across the Taiping-ling (as shown B-B) and hastily fortified. The 1st Siberians were posted on the right of this position, the 4th on the left. A general reserve of ten battalions and sixteen guns was posted in two groups (by General Kuropatkin's direct order) in rear of the centre. Eighteen squadrons with six guns, under General Kossagovski, covered the right flank; while nineteen squadrons with ten guns, under General Mishchenko, covered the left. There were sixteen days' supply for the whole of this force at Ta-shih-chiao station.

There existed the danger—in the view of the Russians—that a portion at least of the 4th Japanese Army might join hands with the 2nd Army;<sup>1</sup> and, enveloping the Russian left, intercept the Russian retreat to Hai-Cheng. It was, doubtless, with that possibility in mind that the Russian position had been placed to the eastward of the railway, so that the line of retreat might be covered in all eventualities.

But the Japanese, unaware of the train of thought by which the Russians were actuated, evidently regarded this position with some suspicion. The Russian object would undoubtedly be to lose no

<sup>1</sup> The Russians were by no means certain but that the bulk of the 4th Army was already in touch with the 2nd. See p. 266.

opportunity of striking with superior forces at one of the Japanese armies; and that army might well be the 2nd Army. The most effective blow which could be delivered against the 2nd Army would be from the north-west, against its left flank, cutting it from its new base at Kaiping, and driving it off the railway line to the south-east into the road-less and food-less mountains.

Now, the Russian position at Ta-shih-chiao appeared to be designed with this very object in view; for the Japanese, in attacking it, must endeavour to envelop one flank or the other. If they enveloped the Russian left flank, they must move the whole of their force east of the railway, entirely uncovering their communications, both with Kaiping and along the railway. If, on the other hand, they enveloped the Russian right, their enveloping force would, in its turn, be liable to be enveloped by hidden Russian reserves posted to the west of Ta-shih-chiao. There was no knowing what reserves the Russians might have in readiness in that region. Great caution was therefore necessary; for, if the 2nd Army were seriously defeated, and driven off its communications into the inhospitable mountains, it might be decisive so far as the 2nd Army was concerned, and all the advantages hitherto gained by the Japanese might be cast away. In view of the strength of the Russian forces at Ta-shih-chiao, which were known to consist of two corps—about equal in number to the Japanese—a decisive victory was hardly to be hoped for. “Only numbers can

annihilate," says Nelson; and his maxim is generally applicable to land as well as to sea warfare. In view of the risks to be run, was it worth while to attempt to win a decisive victory at this juncture? General Oku—and, it is probable, the Imperial Headquarters—evidently considered not. It was wiser to ~~attack~~ the enemy in tentative fashion without fully committing the whole Japanese army, and to trust to demonstrations by the 4th Army to manœuvre him out of his position. The great object was to bring the three armies to bear simultaneously on the same battlefield. General Oku, accordingly, issued orders to the 5th, 3rd, and 6th Divisions to attack the front of the Russians, while he kept the 4th Division practically in reserve in echelon behind the left, his dangerous, flank. Let us quote the order to the 4th Division.

"(6) The 4th Division will take up a position near Wu-tai-shan, and will hold it in strength as a protection for the left flank of the Army. No advance will be made therefrom until it is observed that the general attack elsewhere is succeeding."<sup>1</sup>

As no attempt was to be made to envelop a flank of the Russians, it was hardly probable that the attack would succeed elsewhere. Doubtless, however, it was intended to put in the 4th Division if it became clearly apparent that the Russians did not intend a counter-stroke, and if they, nevertheless, attempted to hold their positions.

The 1st Cavalry Brigade was also posted some

<sup>1</sup> *Official History of the Russo-Japanese War.*

six to seven miles clear of the left flank to give warning of a possible counter-stroke; and, in addition, General Oku retained two regiments of infantry in general reserve under his own immediate control.

The battle of Ta-shih-chiao commenced at 5.30 a.m. on the 24th by a great artillery duel in which the hidden Russian artillery more than held its own in spite of the numerical superiority of the Japanese guns. The 5th Japanese Division on the right, and the 3rd in the centre, pushed the attack with vigour; but the 6th Division on the Japanese left, probably acting in accordance with orders, did not press the attack. The full force of the attack fell on the Russian centre, at the weakest point in the line. The *Russian Official History* considers that the Japanese must have obtained detailed information of the Russian position to be able in this manner to select the most vulnerable point for attack. General Stakelberg, whose corps was on the Russian right, did not even find it necessary to occupy the trenches. Nevertheless, at 1 p.m. he advised General Zarubaiev<sup>z</sup> to retreat, on the grounds that heavy losses were not in accordance with General Kuropatkin's plans: that, judging by the number of guns which the Japanese had brought into action against him, his corps would be the objective of the principal attack; and, finally, that if it became necessary to send forward troops into the trenches, they must suffer severely. General Zarubaiev considered a retreat to be impracticable by daylight; but answered that he would consider the question after nightfall.

At the same time as this correspondence occurred, that is, about 2 p.m., a message was received from General Sasulitch, who commanded the 2nd Siberians at Hsi-mu-Cheng, to the effect that the 4th Japanese Army had, at 10.20 a.m., advanced against him from the mountain passes of Pan-ling and Fen-shui-ling (Ta-ling), and that a Chinese spy reported the existence of a Japanese detachment of 10,000 men about ten miles south-west of the Fen-shui-ling Pass. This was the first and last message received during the day from General Sasulitch, and it will be admitted that it was apt to arouse some little apprehension in General Zarubaiev's mind for his line of retreat.

In the meantime a counter-attack, on which General Zarubaiev had decided about noon, had been attempted. General Chileiko, who was posted on the left of the Russian line, had been ordered to attack the Japanese right in conjunction with General Mishchenko's cavalry. He had been ordered to confer with General Mishchenko. General Chileiko thereupon applied to General Mishchenko, who agreed to assist in the counter-attack. General Chileiko also applied to the commander of the general reserve for two battalions with which to replace his troops in the trenches during the time that they were employed in the attack, but the latter, having received no orders, refused to give the two battalions. In the meantime General Chileiko had despatched one battalion to reconnoitre and to oblige the Japanese to deploy their reserves. But this battalion, advancing against the Japanese front, was received with so heavy a

cross-fire of artillery and rifles that it was immediately thrown into the greatest confusion. It retreated, and was only rallied, having suffered heavily, with some difficulty. General Mishchenko contented himself with sending forward four squadrons with six guns of the fifteen squadrons and ten guns which he now had available. No further attempt was made to execute the counter-attack.

A feeble attempt was also made by General Kossagovski to attack, or rather to threaten, the Japanese left flank ; but, on the first sign of opposition, he retreated, explaining that the ground was too marshy for the action of cavalry.

We are quite astounded at the inaction of these two powerful forces of Russian cavalry in this battle. Here were, it would seem, two unrivalled opportunities for cavalry to envelop and vigorously attack the hostile flanks. Whether the inaction of Generals Mishchenko and Kossagovski was due to the orders they had received, to the unsuitability of the ground—marshy in one place, mountainous in the other—or whether it was due to some false doctrine as regards cavalry action which had been learned with great labour in peace time, it is impossible to say. But in this, as in all the other battles of this war, it would seem as if the Russian cavalry believed that it existed solely for the purpose of gaining information, for the purpose of reconnaissance or of watching, and, perhaps, delaying the enemy's advance, but that it was not incumbent on them to take any part whatsoever in the hard fighting by which battles can alone be won.

Perhaps they were waiting for hostile cavalry to appear, so that they might fight their cavalry duel according to the too common custom of peace manœuvres. General Mishchenko, indeed, appears to have been quite satisfied with the part he and his cavalry had played. "The day," he reported in the evening, "has passed without incident for my detachment. The enemy has not advanced in front of me. It seems to me that, by the despatch of four squadrons and six guns, who changed front to the right, the detachment has, by its artillery fire, seriously prejudiced the adversary and enfeebled his attack in some measure. I have suffered no losses."

The complete breakdown of the Russian local counter-attack was undoubtedly due—as was the case at Telissu—to the failure of the commander of the whole force to issue the necessary orders—to ensure co-operation between the various bodies which were to take part in the counter-attack, and to bring up troops from the reserve, either to execute the counter-attack or to replace those who were to execute it.

Notwithstanding the failure of the Russian counter-attack, the Japanese attack had everywhere been repulsed. The Russian infantry had fought with a gallantry equal to that of the Japanese, while their artillery, cleverly posted, and superior both in range and rapidity of fire to that of the Japanese, had more than held its own. Just before sunset a report reached the Japanese that Russian troops were concentrating behind the Russian right with a view to a counter-stroke. But, as a matter of fact, General

Zarubaiev was preparing to retreat, notwithstanding that he had six battalions untouched in reserve posted behind the centre. General Kuropatkin states that General Zarubaiev "was given general instructions, but allowed freedom of action," and that he decided to retreat early on the morning of the 25th, "in view of the great superiority of the enemy and the development of an attack from the direction of Ta-ling."<sup>1</sup>

General Zarubaiev was evidently under the impression—as is apparent from the *Conferences of the Russian General Staff*<sup>2</sup>—that he was engaged with both the 2nd and 4th Japanese Armies. He himself, however, states that he had but six battalions left in reserve, that the Japanese had, apparently, by no means exhausted theirs, that he was not inclined to accept the risk of a battle on the following day in view of the instructions he had received from General Kuropatkin, which were to the effect that he was to retreat on Hai-Cheng if pressed by the enemy.<sup>3</sup>

The retreat was, as usual with the Russians, admirably conducted during the night of the 24th–25th, and the Japanese gained no knowledge of it. The 5th Japanese Division, however, undertook a night assault, driving the Russian rearguards from their trenches.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. ii. p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> In these Conferences themselves, which took place after the war, the Russians were apparently still firmly convinced that both the 2nd and 4th Japanese Armies were present at Ta-shih-chiao.

<sup>3</sup> *Russian Official History*.

<sup>4</sup> The *Russian Official History* makes no mention of this night assault, but states that at dawn the Japanese recommenced a bombardment, but getting no reply sent forward reconnaissances, which discovered that the Russians had retreated.



This movement was taken up by the other divisions in the early morning, but the Russians had already gone. In this battle the Russians lost about 1050 men killed and wounded, while the Japanese lost about 1100.

By the successful repulse on the 24th of, as they believed, vastly superior numbers of Japanese the Russian morale was greatly increased, and especially did the whole army come to regard the Siberian Corps with respect.<sup>1</sup>

General Kuropatkin considered that notwithstanding the loss of Ying-Kou the retreat from Ta-shih-chiao improved the strategical situation of the Russian army, in that the extended front was reduced by twenty miles.<sup>2</sup>

He approved of General Zarubaiev's decision to retreat, and, in explaining the necessity for the retreat to the Viceroy, stated that the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and a portion of the 10th Japanese Divisions were in front of Ta-shih-chiao.

As a matter of fact, the evacuation of Ta-shih-chiao not only placed Ying-Kou at the disposal of the Japanese, but enabled the 2nd and 4th Japanese Armies to join hands. The last opportunity of defeating these two armies separately had disappeared. But the Russian General Staff, hoodwinked by the action of small Japanese detachments, and by faulty information, had apparently believed that these two

<sup>1</sup> These Siberian Corps had been raised in the Far East in view of this war; and, up to this time, their fighting qualities had not yet been tested.

<sup>2</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. ii. p. 225.

armies had all along been practically united, and that the opportunity of defeating them separately had never existed.

The Viceroy, however, was of a different opinion, and telegraphed a complaint to the Czar. He stated, which was quite true, that the Japanese had not pressed the attack vigorously, and that there was no reason for the retreat. As for the hostile offensive from the Pan-ling and Ta-ling Passes, "an offensive which had the aspect of a demonstration," there was the whole 2nd Siberians at Hsi-mu-Cheng and a brigade of the 10th Corps at Hai-Cheng with which to meet it.

On learning, during the 25th, of the intended retreat of General Zarubaiev, General Kuropatkin immediately counter-ordered the offensive movement which he had intended to direct personally; and left the Eastern group and went to join the Southern group at Hai-Cheng. But he left orders with General Sluchevski, who commanded the 10th Corps, to "make immediate preparations for offensive operations, and, if Kuroki should cross the Tai-tzu Ho and move towards Mukden, at once to advance, whether his troops were prepared for operating in the hills or not, and endeavour to strike Kuroki's communications." The 10th Corps was already concentrated by the 24th on the Lan Ho in readiness for its advance on Chiao-tou, but owing to some cause—the incomplete state of its transport or the lack of information—its movement was delayed for some days.

In the meantime General Kuroki had brought up

five battalions of reserve troops which had been employed on the line of communication.

The 2nd Japanese Army occupied Ying-Kou on the 25th. This gave rise to some discussion in the European press, for Ying-Kou was a treaty port, and was therefore supposed to be neutral. Russian diplomacy sought to turn this point to its advantage, and to prove that the unscrupulous Japanese were prepared to perpetrate any atrocity—even to infringe the rights of neutrals! But it was too well known throughout the world that the Russians themselves had but just evacuated this self-same port only in consequence of their forced retirement from Ta-shih-chiao.

On the 28th July the 5th Japanese Division was sent from the 2nd Army to join the 4th Army with a view to attacking the Russians at Hsi-mu-Cheng. General Nodzu was directed to execute this attack when opportunity offered. His force, the 10th Division and 10th Reserve Brigade, which had now been replaced on the line of communication, arrived on this date within three to four miles of the Russians. He, however, decided to await the arrival of the 5th Division before delivering his attack, for his information told him that the Russian force, entrenched at Hsi-mu-Cheng, consisted of twenty-eight battalions, thirty-two squadrons, and twelve batteries, under General Sasulitch. The force actually consisted of the 2nd Siberians, a brigade of the 10th Corps,<sup>1</sup> which

<sup>1</sup>The 10th Corps was on the extreme left of the Russian line of battle, and yet here was one of its brigades with the southern force, at a distance of fifty miles as the crow flies, from the remainder of its corps. This fact illustrates the intermixture of units of the Russian

had been joined by Mishchenko's cavalry, the whole numbering about thirty-three battalions, thirty-one squadrons, and eighty guns.

After the battle of Ta-shih-chiao the 1st and 4th Siberians had retreated ~~to~~ Hai-Cheng. General Sasulitch immediately pointed out that the retreat of these two corps had left him in occupation of a salient, and that he was now liable to be attacked not only by the 4th Japanese Army, coming from the Pan-ling and Ta-ling Passes, but by the 2nd Army coming from the direction of Ta-shih-chiao. The 1st and 4th Siberians accordingly left rearguards to prolong the line of the 2nd Siberians to the westward, while Mishchenko's cavalry was brought up to keep touch.

General Sasulitch's orders were to "oppose a determined resistance" to the Japanese, but to retreat on Hai-Cheng rather than suffer a serious disaster. He was also ordered to reconnoitre and ascertain if there was a general movement of the Japanese to the north-west. He was also informed that, according to reliable information, the 8th and 9th Japanese Divisions, which had been believed to be in front of the 2nd Siberians, were in Japan.

#### COMBAT OF HSI-MU-CHENG, 31st JULY, 1904.

The 2nd Siberians occupied a position which had been entrenched since the commencement of July,

army at this time. This confusion was, perhaps, the result of indecision in the Russian commanders, combined with the necessity for reinforcing a certain point in haste with any troops available. But it is possible that certain formations were purposely broken up in the hope of confusing and misleading the Japanese.

and which faced south-east, blocking the roads leading from the Pan-ling and Ta-ling Passes. The country was mountainous and very rough. When the likelihood arose that a Japanese attack would come from the south, the brigade of the 10th Corps was hastily posted on the right of the 2nd Siberians to face in the required direction. Time was not given, however, in which to fortify strongly this new front. Between the 27th and 30th July Japanese forces, estimated at 30,000 men or two divisions, approached the southern face of the Russian position, drove in the Russian outposts, and reconnoitred the position. Early on the 31st the Japanese attacked from the south, the 10th *Kobi* Brigade being on the right, the 10th Division in the centre, and the 5th Division on the left. The right of the position was most strongly attacked, and gave way shortly after noon, involving the retreat of Mishchenko's cavalry, which in its turn involved the retreat of the rearguard of the 4th Siberians. The remainder of General Sasulitch's force, however, held its positions until nightfall, when it received orders from General Kuropatkin to retreat on Hai-Cheng.

On this same date a serious engagement had occurred between the 1st Japanese Army and the Eastern Russian group.

COMBAT OF YU-SHU-LING AND YANG-TZU-LING,  
31st JULY, 1904.

On the 28th the bulk of the 10th Corps commenced its advance to recapture Chiao-tou. It

crossed the Lan River and seized certain points with strong advanced and flank guards. Its advance was slow, and it entrenched each point which was suitable for defence. This slow and methodical advance was in accordance with General Kuropatkin's recommendations, which directed that the Japanese positions should be "occupied progressively"; that attacks should be executed by night, by the light of the moon; that each position captured should be immediately entrenched; and that the beaten Japanese should not be pursued until the captured position had been entrenched. At the same time General Sluchevski was ordered to be ready to repulse a Japanese offensive, to guard his flanks against a possible enveloping movement, and to prepare a position for battle.

General Kuropatkin also mentioned that, according to the latest information, the Japanese forces at Chiao-tou were insignificant, and that they were probably forming a screen at that point with a view to massing, under cover of it, either on Count Keller's force or on the right bank of the Tai-tzu Ho on the road to Mukden. It was known to the Russians that three regiments (nine battalions), five squadrons, and eighteen guns of the 12th Division were at Chiao-tou, while the remainder of the 12th Division with, it was believed, two reserve brigades were further back; also that the 2nd and Guard Japanese Divisions were in front of Count Keller's troops.

When the 10th Corps halted after crossing the Lan River it was practically divided into a centre with

two wings; the left wing, consisting of one regiment, was separated from the centre by the Hsi River; while the right wing, consisting of one brigade, was separated from the main body by some four miles of mountainous country. The left wing was directed to maintain touch with General Liubavin's detachment, of which the right was at Pen-hsi-hu. The right wing was similarly ordered to keep touch with Count Keller's forces, which were some twelve to fifteen miles distant to the right over "an intricate mass of trackless mountains." Count Keller's forces, which by this time had been strengthened to about two divisions, were still entrenched about Yang-tzu-ling and Ta-wan behind the Lan Ho, and astride the road from Mo-tien-ling to Liao-yang. The general Russian idea was that Count Keller should hold his positions, while General Sluchevski should assume the offensive and recapture Chiao-tou. But on the evening of the 29th General Kuropatkin ordered the advance to be suspended pending the arrival of a brigade of the 17th Corps, which was to leave Liao-yang to reinforce the 10th Corps on August 2nd. But at 3 a.m. on the 31st July the Japanese assumed the offensive, with a view to attacking the Russians before their preparations should be perfected, and thus "reduce their plans to nought."

The 12th Japanese Division was about Chiao-tou; the 2nd was holding the Mo-tien-ling; the Guard Division was on the left of the 2nd, and in touch with it. The 12th Division was separated from the 2nd by fourteen miles of "broken mountainous country";

but there existed two roads by which communication could be maintained and troops could move. The one led from Mo-tien-ling by Hsia-ma-tang to Chiao-tou; the other from Hsia-ma-tang to Pien-ling, the pass occupied by the right flank guard of the Russian 10th Corps. By this latter road was despatched, at 1.30 a.m. on the 31st, four battalions of the 2nd Division with orders to co-operate with five battalions, a squadron, and a battery of the 12th Division in an attack on the Russian brigade posted at Pien-ling. The attack was well-timed and entirely successful; the Russians but just escaped annihilation. Meanwhile the left flank detachment of the 10th Corps had also been surprised by a regiment of the 12th Division; and the whole division now attacked the main body of the 10th Corps, which was posted on the Yu-shu-ling. The Japanese reserve battalions, which had been brought up to reinforce the 12th Division, were despatched, together with the cavalry of the 12th Division, to watch the Russian detachment under General Liubavin at Pen-hsi-hu, on the road to Mukden.

Simultaneously with this advance of the 12th Division the Guard and six battalions of the 2nd Japanese Division attacked the 3rd Siberians under Count Keller.

The Russian defence of the Yang-tzu-ling, under Count Keller, was, at first, more successful. One division of twelve battalions with sixteen guns was deployed, while four and a half battalions were held in reserve. The Russians had received orders to "defend their positions energetically, and only to



retreat if hard pressed by superior forces." In the afternoon the attack of the Japanese 2nd and Guard Divisions was brought to a standstill ; but the right of the 2nd Division managed to force back the Russian left to a position at right angles to the main line of battle, and parallel to the line of retreat.<sup>1</sup> Count Keller had also been killed, and the command devolved upon General Kashtalinski.

In the afternoon General Kashtalinski called a council of war, which decided to employ the reserve to restore the fight ;<sup>2</sup> but General Kuropatkin, the matter being referred to him, objected to the employment of the reserve on the ground that the direction of the "main effort of the Japanese had not yet been disclosed." The Russians had suffered heavily ; they believed that they were attacked by two whole Japanese divisions. Their line of retreat was threatened ; and the 10th Corps on their left had retreated. General Kashtalinski called a second council of war at nightfall, which decided, apparently without reference to General Kuropatkin, to retreat.

In the meantime General Sluchevski had also decided that the 10th Corps must retreat. During the afternoon he had received a telegram from General Kuropatkin to the effect that Count Keller was being seriously attacked, and that, "as the direction of the main effort of the Japanese had not

<sup>1</sup>The commandant of a Russian regiment retreated in consequence of a misapprehension of his orders, considering that he was hard pressed by superior forces.

<sup>2</sup>Here is an interesting case of a council of war which decided to attempt something.

yet been disclosed," it was not possible to permit the brigade of the 17th Corps to reinforce the 10th Corps. Now the 10th Corps had suffered severely ;<sup>1</sup> General Sluchevski believed that he was being attacked by two Japanese divisions ; he received a report from his cavalry on his left flank at 6.30 p.m. that the Japanese were moving guns towards the Russian left, and that large masses of Japanese infantry were marching behind the guns ; and he accordingly believed that, on the following day, his left flank would be enveloped and his line of retreat to Liao-yang seized. His reserves were exhausted ; and he had no troops with which to meet this expected turning movement. He had also heard, according to General Kuropatkin, that Count Keller's force had retreated. He therefore decided to retreat himself during the night behind the Lan Ho.

Hence at nightfall on the 31st July the Russian offensive had collapsed and the eastern Russian group was about to retreat.

The fear of being "cut off" is very noticeable in this mountain fighting. There was the Russian detachment, a strong force of all arms, under General Liubavin, posted at Pen-hsi-hu, which covered General Sluchevski's left flank. Surely this detachment, which consisted of two or three cavalry regiments, four or five battalions, and eight to ten guns, might be trusted to assume the offensive in aid of the 10th Corps ? No, for it was posted at Pen-hsi-hu in order to prevent General Kuropatkin and the whole

<sup>1</sup>It lost over 2000 men, while the Japanese loss was under 500.

Russian army from being "cut off" from Mukden. This idea of being cut off leads inevitably to a passive attitude. It was this idea which was largely responsible for the Russian retreats—that is, defeats—at Nan-shan and Ta-shih-chiao. It often has been responsible for defeat; it was responsible for the defeat of the French at Spicheren in 1870. A point to notice is that it is immaterial whether the fear is aroused by the actual movements of troops or by false information, or by both combined. False information alone, if it can be employed successfully, is the more effective method, since it enables detachments to be dispensed with, and every available man concentrated at the decisive point.

There surely never has been in the history of war a better illustration of the disastrous results of a dual control of an army. Admiral Alexiev, the Viceroy, a sailor, was attempting to direct the operations of an army. His plan was admirable, provided the leadership, strength, and efficiency of the army were equal to the strain; for an active defence of the nature he proposed demands the very highest qualities from all. Let us consider the nature of the operation.

It is certain that, the moment the Japanese knew that the Russians intended an offensive against their 1st Army, they would retort with an offensive by their 2nd and 4th Armies. Hence, if the Russians would hope for success they must hoodwink the Japanese—no light task; they must concentrate with the utmost secrecy; advance suddenly and rapidly; capture strongly held and entrenched mountain

passes, breaking through the centre of the 1st Japanese Army; strike effective blows to right and left at the separated fragments of the Japanese 1st Army; detach a force to pursue, and return in time to save their southern group in case it were out-matched by the 2nd and 4th Japanese Armies. It must not be forgotten that the difficulty of operating on interior lines has been immeasurably increased since the introduction of the telegraph. Formerly it was possible to stand on the defensive in one quarter, to assail the enemy in another with superior forces, and, perhaps, to beat him before his commander-in-chief even knew that a portion of his forces had been attacked. To-day—where large forces are concerned, which cannot be beaten in a few hours or a single day—this is no longer possible unless the enemy's telegraphs can be destroyed. It is now necessary to attack, or at least to demonstrate against, the enemy at all points, and so leave him in doubt as to the true point of attack. In other words, it is essential to mislead him. Such an operation would demand of the Russians the power of mystifying the adversary, the power of secrecy, mobility, and capacity for mountain fighting of the highest order. If these were lacking, then, the attempt was doomed to failure. General Kuropatkin considered that these were lacking; General Jilinski, the military adviser of the Viceroy, considered, on the other hand, that the operation was feasible. If General Jilinski, or any other general who believed in the feasibility of the operation and was profoundly convinced of

the necessity, had been in chief command, it is possible that he would have executed it successfully ; for, in war, resolute men often execute apparent impossibilities. But the operation was quite impossible to General Kuropatkin, if only for the reason that he did not believe in its feasibility. The Viceroy, had he been wise, would have recognised this trait of human nature ; and either have given way to General Kuropatkin, or have obtained the services of another general to execute his plans, or have resigned. Fortunately for the Russians, General Kuropatkin knew that he could not execute the Viceroy's plan, and, therefore, refused to attempt it. Had he attempted it, in the inevitable half-hearted fashion, the Russians would have paid a severe penalty.

General Kuropatkin's original plan was also excellent, provided he had been permitted to execute it in his own fashion. It was by no means so dashing a plan as the Viceroy's ; but it was safer. General Kuropatkin would have avoided the defeat on the Yalu, probably that at Nan-shan, certainly that at Telissu. When the great battle came to be fought the Russian morale would have been of the highest, the Japanese morale much lower. Who shall say but that the Russians would have beaten the Japanese ; and who shall say what effect a serious defeat would have had on the Japanese troops ?

But a combination of these two hopelessly conflicting plans was doomed to prove disastrous.

With a viceroy and a general at cross purposes, each seeking to force his plan on the other, there

can be but one result. As a matter of fact, General Jilinski also had his plan, which differed both from that of the Viceroy and from that of General Kuropatkin. He agreed with the Viceroy that an immediate offensive against the 1st Japanese Army was essential; but he disagreed with the view of the Viceroy, that the retention of Ying-Kou was vital; and agreed with General Kuropatkin that it would be better for the southern group to fight in the suitable country about Hai-Cheng. There were thus in reality three men trying to command the unfortunate Russian army at one and the same time.

The question arises, were all these officials necessary? A viceroy is but another name for a statesman who is responsible for the conduct of national strategy. He has three weapons at his disposal: diplomacy, the navy, and the army; and it is his special province to co-ordinate the operations of the three. When war breaks out, diplomacy, as regards the hostile power, is finished, but is still necessary as regards neutrals. In this case, however, diplomacy with neutrals was carried on by the Russian Government in St. Petersburg; and, so far as diplomacy was concerned, a viceroy in the Far East was no longer necessary. But so long as the operations of the army and navy must be co-ordinated, so long was a viceroy necessary. The fleet, however, was shut up in Port Arthur; and, even at this period, it was evident to all that its fate was bound up with that of the fortress. The ultimate fate of the fortress now depended entirely on the action of the army, and co-ordination of the action

of army and navy was no longer possible. Hence a viceroy would seem to have been unnecessary. It may be argued that a viceroy was necessary in order to form a just appreciation of the effect of a Russian offensive on the political situation in Russia; but any average general, or, indeed, any man, could point out that if the Russian arms suffered another defeat the evil effects of it on the political situation would quickly wipe out any beneficial results which might temporarily have accrued from the report of an intended offensive movement. Another defeat would seriously lower the Russian morale, and would be apt to destroy the confidence of the subordinate leaders in their chief. Such an unfortunate result—a long stride on the road to ultimate defeat—would surely be worthy of more consideration than the temporary alleviation of the political tension in Russia.

The success of the armed force is, in war, the most vital of all national interests. With victory all secondary matters right themselves. The great object was to win victory; but victory was not to be won at this juncture by a foolish display of the “offensive spirit,” and by an advance of unseasoned and unprepared troops, led by a general who was acting against his better judgment, against a highly efficient enemy.

Nevertheless, the presence of a viceroy might be upheld with some show of reason on the grounds that, on the arrival of the Baltic fleet, it would again become necessary to co-ordinate the action of the sea and land forces, and that a man on the spot was

necessary for the conduct of diplomacy with China. There can, however, be no justification for the existence of a private chief of the staff, or "military adviser," with the Viceroy. So long as there was but one army, the undoubted prerogative of the commander of that army was to act as the military adviser of the Viceroy.

A point of interest in this connection is that here we have three highly educated and capable men, each of whom must have known full well that a dual or triple control must of necessity prove fatal. Yet no one of them, so far as we know, telegraphed his resignation to the Czar, or required as an alternative that the dual control should cease and that he should be given supreme command. Why was that?

But we now ask, why did General Kuropatkin openly express his intention on the 21st of assuming the offensive? Was it to hearten up the troops? Or did he do so in obedience to the orders of the Viceroy, so that the welcome news might be at once telegraphed to Russia? Or was it in the hope that an open expression of his intentions would lead the Japanese to discredit the report?

We have no answer to these questions; but, whatever the cause may have been, it was certainly most unfortunate; for the Japanese evidently knew all about it, and made arrangements to assume the offensive themselves so as "to bring to nought" the Russian plans.

By these operations the 2nd and 4th Japanese Armies had finally formed their junction in the



neighbourhood of Hai-Cheng; while the 1st Army was firmly established on the mountain passes overlooking the Tai-tzu Ho, and in a position from which it could advance, if it so desired, directly on Mukden or against the railway, which was vital to the very existence of the Russian army.

The Japanese had advanced from "an enveloping base," as General Kuropatkin terms it. The obvious danger of such an operation is lest one army should be overwhelmed before the others can come to its assistance. Though the Japanese armies had been separated by great distances—forty miles between the 1st and 4th Armies and over sixty between the 4th and 2nd, and by roadless, and almost impassable, mountain ranges; and though General Kuropatkin's idea—or, rather, Admiral Alexiev's, or perhaps General Jilinski's—had been to concentrate on one or other of these armies, yet no opportunity for doing so had as yet been afforded him. It was a great achievement, executed with remarkable ingenuity and genius. It had been accomplished by mystifying and misleading the Russian leaders, by attracting their attention, now to this point, now to that; by utilising Port Arthur as a lever with which to hamper them and to manipulate their strategy, and so to confuse their ideas that they were never able to divine the point against which the next blow would be directed. The extent to which the Japanese had succeeded is illustrated by the movements of a certain Russian infantry regiment. It was with Count Keller. On the 13th

June it was ordered to Anshanchan, on the railway line south of Liao-yang; on reaching that place it was sent back to Count Keller. On the 26th it was sent forward towards the mountain passes, but was stopped and brought back on the 27th. It left again on the same day for Hai-Cheng, arriving on the 28th, whence it moved by rail to Liao-yang on the 30th. It then returned to Count Keller, with another of Count Keller's regiments, and arrived just too late to defend the mountain passes.<sup>1</sup>

The left of the 1st Japanese Army was, nevertheless, still separated from the right of the 4th by a distance of some thirty miles of mountainous country; and there still existed the possibility that the Russians might endeavour to concentrate against one or other of these masses. But the 1st Army, though isolated, was strongly posted in mountains, in which it had already displayed a fighting capacity far superior to that of the Russians. It could now be trusted to hold its own until the 2nd and 4th Armies could bring pressure to bear against Liao-yang and the line of retreat of any Russian force which might venture to attack the 1st Army. The Russians were quite unlikely to attack the 2nd and 4th Armies; for the 1st Army was admirably posted to bring pressure to bear against the Russian left flank and the vital railway line. Every movement, every reported movement, of this 1st Army must henceforth strike directly at the nerves of the Russian Commander-in-chief; and when a Commander-in-chief's nerve is affected, his

<sup>1</sup> *British Official History.*

army is already half beaten ; for, in place of clearly thought-out plans and decided and rapid action, we have indecision and irresolution, which quickly permeate through the subordinate leaders, down even to the very rank and file.

The Japanese had, apparently, enjoyed remarkably accurate information, supplemented, apparently, by an equally remarkable power of divination. The Japanese leaders could view the situation with the eyes of the Russian leaders ; and could, accordingly, play upon their fears and touch their nerves. Such a power argues the most careful training of the imagination in peace time ; it sounds a little thing, but it is not. The intelligence organisation must have been built up during the ten years preceding the outbreak of hostilities. The *Russian Official History* explains that the Russians were at a serious disadvantage in this respect, owing to their ignorance of the Chinese language and customs ; whereas the Japanese, who had assiduously educated their men in the Russian language, could, at any time, extract information from the Chinese or from prisoners. They could even pose as peaceful Chinese and enter the Russian lines with but little danger of detection. In addition, as we have already seen, the Japanese knew how to maintain secrecy ; the Russians did not.

Here we have an example of failure in preparation for war. The Russians had been in occupation of Chinese territory for a long period of years. They possess a great reputation as linguists. It seems certain that they would have possessed numerous

interpreters, both in Chinese and Japanese, together with large numbers of men with a working knowledge of these languages, had the Russian Government concerned itself in peace time in the matter and offered inducements for the study of these languages. We have an object-lesson at this present moment, under our very noses, in our own country. Is it possible to estimate the number of German soldiers who possess a fair working knowledge of the English language, to say nothing of a fair working knowledge of certain districts in England? How many British soldiers, on the other hand, possess a fair working knowledge of German, or indeed, of any other language except Hindustani and Arabic? It is said that the German waiter in England is "state aided"; there is no inducement to a British soldier to obtain a working knowledge of German. One cannot expect a nation which is profoundly ignorant of the nature of war, which regards war as wicked, or foolish, or, like the Israelites of old, as a punishment for its sins, and which is unorganised for war, to prepare sensibly for war; it must be beaten first. But for a nation in arms, such as the Russians, to be "caught napping" in this fashion, is certainly astounding.

A point for us to bear in mind is that the Japanese were the pupils of the Germans; and those who care to study the French official history of the Franco-German War, and especially the information which was received by the French, will find ample grounds for the belief that the Japanese learnt their subtlety from Moltke's disciples, though they doubtless

improved on their masters. The Germans, we may be certain, will improve on their pupils on the next occasion when they go to war.

The reader may, perhaps, point out that if all this mystifying and misleading is true, we must then discredit the reasons given us by the Japanese for this, that, or the other operation. That is true enough. We must not only discredit the reasons given us by the Japanese, but those given to the world by every nation which has just passed through a great war. Let the reader go to a large commercial firm, inform them that he proposes to set up in business himself, and that he would be obliged to them if they would explain to him some of their business secrets. He will find himself regarded as a lunatic. And war is, according to the German idea—an idea, judging from the Italians in 1911, which has now been accepted by all nations in arms—merely “business pushed to extreme limits.” A nation which has passed through a war has purchased experience—certain secrets as to how war should be conducted and victory won—at a tremendous cost in life and money. Yet we expect such a nation to divulge to us—who may become its competitors in the future—its most valuable secrets!

It is this that constitutes the difficulty of the study of war. The motives and methods published to the world by the victor are only partially true; it is only the defeated nation which, in its mortification, and in the necessity for punishing individuals, or educating its own people, probes into and brings into the light

of day its most secret motives and methods.<sup>1</sup> The student of war must take the well-authenticated facts, the actual operations executed, and deduce therefrom the plans and the motives by which the combatants were actuated. Any other method of studying military history is sheer waste of time.

But given the accuracy of the Japanese intelligence and the capacity of the Japanese leaders, they would, nevertheless, have failed to accomplish their task unless the most perfect harmony had existed between the Japanese commanders. Such sympathy depends on two things, patriotism and training. The former, loyalty to a great ideal, to the honour and welfare of the Fatherland, means entire self-effacement, the effacement of all personal ambition, save only to accomplish duty without hope of reward, as without fear of punishment. Training means that each commander, knowing his work, knows well what neighbouring commanders will do in any given circumstance.

But, above all, there must be one brain to direct the operations as a whole, and to solve, without interference, the great national problem before him—a man who understands when to be cautious, when to be bold; a man who possesses the knowledge and capacity with which to calculate, and the courage to

<sup>1</sup> Even then, unless a revolution, following on defeat, has upset the ruling powers, the whole truth is seldom told. Compare the *Russian Official History* in the matter of the Yalu timber company with the *French Official History* of 1870-71. Such portions of the *Russian Official History* as have yet been published make no attempt to explain why Dalny was equipped as a fine port.

venture; a man who recognises that to calculate without venturing is the part of a poltroon, but that to venture without calculation is the part of a fool.

Modern war assuredly demands great things of national leaders; and the wise nation will not be content to train its whole manhood to arms, and organise and discipline itself, but will train its leaders, statesmen as well as admirals and generals, in this *business* of war with extreme thoroughness and care.

It has recently been demonstrated<sup>1</sup> that all war is bad business; and that the financial relationship between civilised nations is so close that a victorious nation will suffer as much as, if not more than, the vanquished. This theory may come to be universally accepted in time—who knows? It is to be noted, however, that workmen go out on strike—a proceeding which, if comprehending many trades, may easily develop into revolution—and are by no means deterred by the knowledge that they are ruining themselves as well as their employers. This matter of war seems, indeed, to be one of the problems of the universe; and party strife, revolution, and all competition but varying aspects of it. Meanwhile, under present conditions, there is one form of madness which will certainly prove to be more disastrous than the “madness of war”; and that is, the neglect to prepare for it.

<sup>1</sup> *The Great Illusion*. By Norman Angell.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE STRATEGICAL SITUATION PRIOR TO THE BATTLE OF LIAO-YANG.

AFTER the fighting at the end of July the Russian army withdrew to positions astride the railway at Anshanchan, and astride the road from Feng-huang-Cheng to Liao-yang at Lang-tzu-shan and An-ping. The positions at Hai-Cheng, on the fortification of which two months' labour had been expended, were thus evacuated. So also was a vast amount of material which had been accumulated for the construction of a railway from Hai-Cheng to Hsiu-yen. This railway had been designed with a view to assisting the Russian advance when the time should arrive to drive the Japanese finally off the mainland of Asia.

To show the effect on the Russians of the operations described in the last chapter, we cannot do better than quote General Kuropatkin. "The complicated nature of the situation now necessitated extreme caution on our part, lest anything should prevent our concentration in strength at Liao-yang, and there fighting a decisive battle against all three Japanese armies with some hope of success. From



Liao-yang to our position on the eastern front An-ping—Lang-tzu-shan was twenty miles, and to Hai-Cheng forty miles. In order to ensure the movement of the troops on the southern front to their positions at Liao-yang in good time, it was necessary to move them from Hai-Cheng to the position at Anshan-chan, fifteen miles from Liao-yang, which was fortified at the beginning of the war. The retirement began early on August 2nd, and on the following day the troops were concentrated on the position. In my report to the Tsar of August 4th, I gave the following general reasons for withdrawing to the line Anshanchan—Lang-tzu-shan—An-ping after the July fighting :

“ 1. The Japanese superiority in numbers ;<sup>1</sup>

“ 2. They were accustomed to hills and hot weather ; they were younger, carried lighter loads, and had numerous mountain artillery and pack transport ;

“ 3. Their energetic and intelligent leadership ;

“ 4. The extraordinary patriotism and military spirit of their troops ; and

“ 5. The lack of such a spirit on our side (caused by general ignorance of what we were fighting for).”<sup>2</sup>

General Kuropatkin also gave other reasons<sup>3</sup> for his retreat. The troops of the Eastern Group were some-

<sup>1</sup> The Russian General Staff believed at this period that the Japanese numbered 200,000 men, and that their 7th, 9th, and, perhaps, the 11th Divisions were with the Japanese field armies. As a matter of fact, they numbered 125,000, while the Russians numbered 140,000 to 150,000.

<sup>2</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. ii. p. 227.

<sup>3</sup> *Russian Official History*.

what demoralised by their defeat on the 31st July; they had retreated to a position which was too extended for their numbers; the group was widely separated from the Southern Group, and there existed the possibility that the Japanese might concentrate a part of their 4th Army with their 1st to attack it. In case the Eastern Group were forced to retreat, or in case the 1st Japanese Army crossed the Tai-tzu River and advanced on Liao-yang, the situation of the Southern Group, if too far to the south, would become, in General Kuropatkin's opinion, exceedingly dangerous.

It will be remembered that General Kuropatkin's original idea had been to retire, if necessary, back to Harbin, and to refuse a decisive battle until he could attack the Japanese with largely superior numbers. Now, however, we see that he has modified his original plan; and he now intends to retire to Liao-yang, and there to fight a "decisive battle," but with the assistance of the fortified "zone of manœuvre" which he had constructed at that place. It seems probable that he had modified his plans in consequence of the constant pressure which had been exercised on him by the Viceroy.

The Viceroy, at this time, was on his way to visit Vladivostok; but, on hearing of the events of the 31st July, he hurriedly returned to Liao-yang, and summoned General Kuropatkin to a conference. This conference took place on the 3rd August. The Viceroy apparently agreed with General Kuropatkin that there was every likelihood of a Japanese turning

movement across the Tai-tzu Ho towards Mukden ; but he considered that it was essential to meet this threat by a great offensive movement against the 1st Japanese Army. He would not hear of the evacuation of Liao-yang.

General Kuropatkin, however, still considered that such an offensive was out of the question on account of the demoralised condition of the Eastern Group, the lack of mountain artillery, of transport, the number of reservists of the second category in the ranks,<sup>1</sup> and the shortage of officers. He refused to assume the offensive until the army had been provided with the above essentials and reinforced by the 5th and 6th Siberian Corps, the 1st European Corps, and two other corps from Europe. Before these reinforcements could arrive the capacity of the railways must be vastly increased. According to the *Russian Official History*, General Kuropatkin's plan was to retire to the fortified camp at Liao-yang solely in order to gain time and await the arrival of reinforcements. It seems probable that he hoped to utilise his "zone of manœuvre" to get the Japanese at a disadvantage, but that if he failed to make

<sup>1</sup> The reservists of the first category had been retained in Russia in view of possible trouble on the western frontiers with Germany or Austria. The Russian soldier served in the active army for five years and in the reserve for thirteen years. The reserve service was divided into two categories, the 1st of seven years, and the 2nd of six years. Thus the 2nd category men had been absent from the colours for a long time ; and, as they had received only two weeks' training a year while in the 1st category, and none at all while in the 2nd, their military value was not great. Whole units were composed of these reservists.

an opportunity, or to gain the necessary time, he intended to continue his retreat on Mukden. There is, indeed, some reason to believe that General Kuropatkin was not honest in his expressed intention to fight a "decisive battle" at Liao-yang, but that he merely desired to pacify the Viceroy; for, on the 4th August, he took measures to facilitate the retreat of the army beyond Liao-yang on the road to Mukden.

Let us now consider the extent to which this fortified zone of manœuvre was calculated to influence the operations. It consisted, at this time, of a treble line of works constituting a bridge head in the immediate neighbourhood of Liao-yang. The fortifications had been commenced in March. The right flank rested on the river at Fort No. 8; the left was carried across the river at Mu-chang to the high ground east of Hsin-Cheng, and thence by the villages of Chan-hsi-tun and Fan-chia-tun to Sai-chia-tun. The fortification of this triple line of works (marked A-A on Map No. 8) was commenced in earnest in April, 1904; and by the end of July the entrenchments had assumed the proportions of semi-permanent works, furnished with ditches, obstacles, flank defence, overhead cover and bomb-proof casemates. This line of works was termed the "principal position of Liao-yang." Unfortunately, on the left bank of the river the works were dominated by the high ground along the line Ma-yeh-tun and Hill 693 by Wu-chia-kou to Hsia-pu; and, from these heights, the Japanese could bring a converging artillery fire to bear, and

could also shell the railway station at Liao-yang. It was considered, in the first instance, that the Russian army was too weak to hold this extended line; but, at the end of July, General Kuropatkin decided to fortify it. Differences of opinion appear to have existed as to the best line to occupy; and it was not until the 23rd August that the fortification of the "advanced position" on the line Ma-yeh-tun—Wu-chia-kou—Hsia-pu was commenced. At the same time entrenchments were constructed on Heights 1057 and 920, at Hsi-kuan-tun and Manju-Yama, on the right bank of the river. This "advanced position" is marked C-C on Map No. 8. In addition to these, there were the positions at Anshanchan and An-ping (marked B-B on Map No. 8), of which the entrenchments had been commenced as early as March. It is evident that this fortified area would afford General Kuropatkin the power to rapidly transfer his army from one bank to the other of the Tai-tzu River without the knowledge of the Japanese; and, with this object in view, he had constructed six bridges. If the Japanese continued their advance and attacked the Russians in this entrenched camp, they must either endeavour to turn one or both of the Russian flanks, or rest content with a purely frontal attack. In the latter case it seemed probable that they must undertake what would practically amount to siege operations at a great cost in men and time, exhaust their force, and render themselves vulnerable to a great counter-offensive by the Russian reinforcements when

they arrived. If, on the other hand, they sought to turn a flank or to invest this fortified area, they must throw a portion of their forces across the river. Then would come the opportunity of the Russians; for General Kuropatkin could either endeavour to overwhelm the turning column on the right bank of the river or issue from his entrenched camp against the Japanese forces on the left bank.

But it was only if the Russians retired into their defences that they could hope to utilise them; not only that, but they must induce the Japanese to come forward to attack them. For, certainly, the Japanese would know of these fortifications, could appreciate the uses to which the Russians would put them, and might, perhaps, hesitate to enter the zone which had been so carefully prepared.

In this connection we must notice that General Kuropatkin, by his decision to retire to Liao-yang, had finally discarded the idea of utilising the "interior lines," and concentrating against one or other of the separated Japanese forces. There are those who, like the Viceroy, consider that he was wrong; and that he still held the power to overwhelm the 1st Japanese Army before the 2nd and 4th could intervene with effect. There are others who maintain that he was right; that time and space were now lacking; and that the attempt to execute the operation would infallibly result in the envelopment of the Russian forces.

Doubtless a Napoleon with a highly efficient army which he had commanded through many campaigns

might still have succeeded in holding the Japanese armies apart and overwhelming each one in turn; but, as we have seen, the circumstances of the Russian army were entirely different. Each one of the Russian army corps composing the army, with the exception of a portion of the 17th Corps, had already been beaten or roughly handled; the army, as a whole, had never yet fought under its Commander-in-chief; neither would its training, organisation, nor general efficiency appear to have been equal to a task of such magnitude, which demanded mobility of a high order and great fighting capacity.

In the meantime there was the fortified zone at Liao-yang which, if cleverly utilised, would enable General Kuropatkin to separate his enemy's forces and beat them piecemeal while running less risk of being caught and annihilated. It would hardly seem wise to construct a fortified zone at great labour and expense, and then fight in front of it—unless some distinct advantage were to be gained by so doing. Such a course would play into the hands of the Japanese, whose natural desire would be to bring the Russians to battle outside their entrenched camp.

The Russian army was divided into two groups, with reserves at Liao-yang and Mukden, and several detachments thrown out to cover the flanks.

The Southern Group, under General Zarubaiev, consisted of the 1st, 4th, and 2nd Siberians, which were posted astride the railway at Anshanchan, its right at Ku-shu-tzu, its left at Ku-san-tzu.

The 1st and 2nd Siberians each had two advanced guards, while the 4th had one advanced guard pushed out to the front. A reserve, collected from the three corps, and consisting of twenty-six battalions and sixty-four guns, was posted about three miles north of Anshanchan, and to this reserve was attached the "cavalry reserve," under General Samsonov, consisting of seventeen squadrons and six guns. The whole group numbered fifty-nine battalions, fifty squadrons, and 156 guns.

General Mishchenko's cavalry of eleven squadrons and six guns watched the interval between the Southern and Eastern Groups.

The Eastern Group, under General Bilderling, consisted of the 3rd Siberians and 10th European Corps, and was posted in a semicircle with its right near Kao-feng-tzu on the Tang Ho and its left on Height 1800, near the Tai-tzu Ho. The 3rd Siberians, of which the bulk was in the entrenchments, had two advanced guards pushed out to the front; the 10th Corps was posted in the entrenchments with a reserve at An-ping. A brigade of the 17th European Corps, eight battalions with forty-four guns, was posted on the right bank of the Tai-tzu Ho near Height 1057. A bridge had been thrown over the Tai-tzu River near its junction with the Tang, by which this brigade could, if necessary, be brought across the river to reinforce the troops in the first line; but it was posted as a detachment to cover the left flank of the army, and it is uncertain whether it was under the orders of General Bilderling or those of General Kuropatkin.



The whole group, including the brigade of the 17th Corps, numbered seventy-five battalions, twenty-six squadrons, and 240 guns.<sup>1</sup>

A general reserve was posted at Liao-yang, and was under the immediate orders of General Kuropatkin. It consisted of troops drawn from various corps, especially from the 2nd Siberians and the 17th Corps. It numbered thirty battalions, seventeen squadrons, and 157 guns. In addition to these, a garrison had been detailed for Liao-yang, consisting of six battalions, three squadrons, and twenty-eight siege guns. About eleven battalions of this reserve were, apparently, employed in constructing the fortifications along the line C-C.

Another reserve existed at Mukden. It consisted of the bulk of the 5th Siberians, which had but just arrived. It numbered twenty-four battalions, six squadrons, and thirty-two guns, but of these eight battalions and sixteen guns were about to be despatched to reinforce the detachments posted along the Tai-tzu River to cover the left flank of the army. It is not clear whether this reserve at Mukden was under the orders of General Kuropatkin or of the Viceroy. In addition to this reserve there was a garrison at Mukden, consisting of five battalions. The remainder of the 5th Siberians, together with

<sup>1</sup>There is considerable discrepancy in the numbers given by various accounts, due to the fact, apparently, that troops were continually being withdrawn from their corps for one purpose or another. Thus, twelve battalions and eighteen guns of the 10th Corps were away from that corps on the 23rd August. These have, however, been included in the numbers given above, for it appears that they were brought up during the battle and posted in reserve at An-ping.

the first echelons of the 1st European Corps, were at this time arriving at Mukden by rail.

Several detachments had been thrown out to the flanks to guard against turning movements. On the extreme left, posted on the Ta-ling Mountains about Hsing-Cheng, and watching the road from Huai-jen-Hsien to Mukden, were two battalions, nine squadrons, and two guns under Colonel Madritov.

At Pei-ling-pu-tzu and San-chia-tzu was posted General Liubavin's detachment, consisting of twelve squadrons and four guns.

At Pen-hsi-hu, where the road from Chiao-tou to Mukden crosses the Tai-tzu Ho, was posted General Grulev's detachment, consisting of four battalions, six squadrons, and four guns.

Watching the line of the Tai-tzu Ho between Pen-hsi-hu and Manju-Yama was a dragoon regiment of six squadrons.

West of the railway, at Ta-wan, on the Liao Ho, watching the right flank, and covering the line of communications, was General Kossagovski's detachment, consisting of one and a half battalions, eight squadrons, and four guns. This detachment was shortly to be raised to eight battalions, nine squadrons, and eighteen guns, while, on the 26th, one battalion, fourteen squadrons, and fourteen guns were sent to Hsiao-pei Ho, halfway between Liao-yang and Ta-wan to watch the river line, and four battalions and eight guns were sent to Hsin-min-tun, thirty-five miles west of Mukden, to cover the communications.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact strength and composition of these detachments, which were constantly relieved by fresh troops or reinforced or reduced. Roughly speaking, detachments totalling about twenty-three battalions, thirty-eight squadrons, and forty-six guns<sup>1</sup> were considered necessary by General Kuropatkin to give warning of a possible Japanese turning movement, and to check the Japanese advance in order to gain time for the necessary arrangements to be made. The strength of these detachments shows clearly the tremendous importance attached by General Kuropatkin to his solitary line of railway. That line of railway has been described as the vertebrae of the Russian army, which, if permanently severed, would mean the death of that army. This is the primary fact to bear in mind in the study of this battle, or, indeed, in the study of this war.

Most of these detachments were posted east of Liao-yang, and this fact shows that it was from the eastward that the principal danger was apprehended.

But apprehension of a hostile movement against the railway line from the west also existed, and this fear was caused by reports of a concentration of Chinese troops under General Ma on the western borders of Manchuria. It was feared that—Manchuria being, after all, Chinese property—the Chinese, fired by the Japanese victories, might cast aside their neutrality

<sup>1</sup>They were actually raised to this strength on the 26th, when General Kuropatkin finally decided to retire into his "advanced positions." On the 24th their strength amounted to ten battalions, thirty-eight squadrons, and fourteen guns.

and attack the Russians. The Press of the period gave one to understand—the information obviously emanating from Japanese sources—that Japanese diplomacy was hard put to it to induce China to remain neutral and to check the ardour of local Chinese magnates. It was also reported that the Chinese force under General Ma had been assiduously trained and, though small, some 30,000 strong, had become very efficient. There were also the Hun-tu-huses, the Manchurian brigands, who had played a great part in the Boxer rebellion of 1900, and who, it was considered probable, might join the Chinese in considerable numbers as well as endeavour to break the railway lines on their own account. There were also constant reports that Japanese agents were secretly stirring up the Chinese and the Hun-tu-huses; it was even rumoured that Japanese troops had set out from Ying-Kou and were moving up the Liao River and the Tientsin—Hsin-min-tun Railway to join the Chinese, and that the Chinese forces would, for the time being, pose as Japanese troops. Chinese spies reported that, when the Japanese advance commenced, troops were to move up the Liao River on Mukden and Tieh-ling. One Chinese agent reported that 25,000 to 30,000 Japanese were landing west of Ying-Kou; and this information was corroborated by a Japanese order, dated the 9th August, which detailed the 6th Cavalry Regiment to cover the disembarkation of this "army." Wild rumours, many of them, doubtless; but by no means incredible, and apt to render the Russian

commander extremely nervous for his line of communication.

As a matter of fact, Chinese intervention might have brought France, and therefore Great Britain, into the struggle with an attempt to terminate the war. Such a contingency would, as we shall see, have been fatal to Japanese interests if it were to occur before Port Arthur had fallen. A Chinese breach of neutrality might suit the Japanese admirably after Port Arthur had been captured, provided it could be cleverly accomplished—ostensibly contrary, that is, to Japanese desires.

In the meantime we are in doubt as to whether General Kuropatkin believed or disbelieved these rumours of Chinese intervention. It is possible, indeed, that the rumours emanated from, or were exaggerated by, the Russians themselves. It was a great object of Russian diplomacy to pose as the champion of Christendom against the heathen Asiatics.

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that General Kuropatkin apprehended enterprises against the railway from the west as well as from the east. He therefore took measures to watch his right flank, and, in addition to the detachment posted at Ta-wan, a close watch was maintained by the Russian cavalry along the Tai-tzu River below Liao-yang. And, on the 26th August, in consequence of reports of the appearance of Japanese patrols west of the Liao River, detachments were, as we have seen, posted near Hsin-min-tun, thirty-five miles west of Mukden,

to defend that city from the westward, and at Hsiao-pei Ho, halfway between Liao-yang and Ta-wan, to watch the river line.

This instances the manner in which the available force of an army can be reduced by a mere threat which touches the Commander-in-chief's nerves, that is, against some vital point.

Let us now turn for a moment to study the general situation of the Japanese armies, and compare them, in respect of their lines of communication, with the Russians.

The 1st Army was still based on Korea. It had constructed a tram line from Antung to Feng-huang-Cheng. The construction of this line had been commenced shortly after the Battle of the Yalu, and was completed in July.<sup>1</sup> It had also established three advanced depots on the three roads by which its three divisions had advanced—at places where these roads cross the Fen-shui-ling Mountains—namely, at Chiao-tou for the 12th Division, at Lien-shan-Kuan for the 2nd Division, and at Tung-fang-liu-ho for the Guard Division. At these advanced depots had been collected seven days' supply by the 15th August, in addition to the eight days' carried by each division.

Detachments had been pushed out to the north and east to cover this line of communication. Two *Kobi*, or reserve, battalions were posted at Cheng-

<sup>1</sup>This line was carried through to Liao-yang after the Battle of Mukden, and since the war it has been converted into a permanent railway line.

Chang, and a small detachment was at Hsiao-hsi-erh. The Guard Reserve Brigade was at Chiao-tou; but it was to be used, not to hold the lines of communication, but as part of the field army.

Thus the Japanese were content to employ rather over two battalions<sup>1</sup> to cover their communications on this flank, while on this same flank the Russians employed for the same purpose fifteen battalions, about sixteen squadrons, and twenty-eight guns. But the line of communication of the Japanese 1st Army was far less important to its existence than was the railway line to the Russian army. For the 1st Japanese Army could, in emergency, draw its supplies from, or retreat on, Ta-Ku-Shan, which was still held as a base for the 4th Army, while, in such a contingency, the latter could utilise Ying-Kou, the base of the 2nd Army, or the railway line to Talien-wan.<sup>2</sup> The Japanese held this enormous advantage over the Russians, that they possessed three or four distinct lines of communication to different bases, while

<sup>1</sup> So far as we know, that is. The Russians believed, at the time, that the Japanese were employing some 4000 to 5000 Koreans to guard their communications to Korea. It is also practically certain that the Japanese employed troops of their "Conscript Reserve," which consisted of men not required for the active army, but who were liable to be called out in time of war to make up deficiencies in it. They received 150 days' training in the first year of their service. See App. ii. Troops of the depot battalions, who were employed to replace losses in the field units, were also available for the defence of the communications.

<sup>2</sup> The Japanese were still engaged in altering the gauge of the railway line to suit their own rolling-stock. This course was rendered necessary by the lack of engines. The line was opened, to traffic up to Liao-yang in October, 1904.

the Russians possessed but one. The Japanese knew that their line of communication to Korea was comparatively safe, for the Russian detachments on the flank of it had up to the present displayed neither initiative nor vigour. The Japanese, owing to their “enveloping base,” as General Kuropatkin terms it, could manœuvre freely, especially to the eastward, without much fear of having their line of retreat intercepted, and they could consequently indulge in turning movements and endeavour to envelop the Russian flanks with comparative impunity. Not so the Russians. They were tied fast to their railway line, and a turning column pushed far from the railway and seeking to envelop a Japanese flank must immediately discard its offensive and retreat if the Japanese progressed up the railway line. The “enveloping base” of the Japanese gave them the power to initiate enveloping movements, a power which was denied to the Russians.<sup>1</sup> The Germans in 1870, with an extended base along the Rhine, held a similar advantage over the French army, which was based on Paris.

We can easily understand, therefore, that General Kuropatkin, in view of his nervousness for his line of communication, the threats against that line, the “enveloping base” enjoyed by the Japanese, the fighting capacity of the Japanese troops as compared with his own, the lack of mobility of his own troops, especially in the mountains, as compared with the

<sup>1</sup> Compare with the Battle of the Sha Ho, where this problem of an “enveloping base” is further illustrated.



Japanese, the want of mountain artillery,<sup>1</sup> the Russian reinforcements which were constantly if slowly arriving, should have preferred to fight in his fortified zone rather than in front of it, running less risk of decisive defeat while retaining an equal, if not greater, chance of decisive victory.

It must not be forgotten, moreover, that General Kuropatkin and his staff greatly exaggerated the Japanese numbers, believing that each Japanese division had been strengthened by a reserve brigade of eight battalions, and that the 8th and 9th Divisions were with the 4th Japanese Army. The Japanese numbers were estimated at :

1st Army—54,000 to 68,000 bayonets, 1700 sabres, and 216 guns.

4th Army—45,000 men with 108 guns.

2nd Army—54,000 to 74,000 bayonets, 2600 sabres, and 252 guns.

Or a total<sup>1</sup> of 153,000 to 187,000 bayonets, 4300 sabres, and 576 guns ; whereas their actual numbers were 104,600 bayonets, 3300 sabres, and 464 guns.

The Russian army numbered 128,000 bayonets, 15,910 sabres, 3900 mounted scouts, and 673 guns.

Thus we see that, in the estimation of the Russians, the Japanese possessed a superiority in infantry of from 25,000 to 59,000 men, which, taken in conjunction with the Japanese superiority in mountain artillery, rendered it extremely desirable that the

<sup>1</sup> The Russians possessed only twenty-seven mountain guns, while the Japanese possessed 108.

Russians should avoid a decisive battle in mountainous country.

It will be seen that the Russian information was extremely faulty in spite of the fact that they possessed cavalry four times as numerous as that of the Japanese. The Russian cavalry appears to have engaged in constant reconnaissances, which, however, achieved no results. General Kuropatkin, dissatisfied with the work of the cavalry,<sup>1</sup> concerned himself at this period with the formation of a cavalry corps which was to act under his immediate orders.

The Japanese intelligence, on the other hand, appears to have been, as regards essentials—that is, the numbers and distribution of the hostile forces—very accurate. Marshal Oyama reported that he was opposed by five corps, or twelve to thirteen divisions, and that, in addition, one corps was in reserve northwest of Liao-yang. He was wrong, however, as regards the identity of the various corps, believing them to be the 2nd, 4th, 5th, 7th, and 17th Corps.

“Every moment gained at the beginning of August,” writes General Kuropatkin, “was of great importance to us, as the units of the 5th Siberians,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See General Kuropatkin's tactical instructions issued, it is believed, on the 30th August (*Russian Official History*, vol. iii. App. 173). In these he criticises the failure of the Russian cavalry to obtain information or to capture prisoners; and he urges it to display more determination in breaking through the hostile screen and in facing hostile infantry patrols.

<sup>2</sup> The 5th Siberians commenced detraining at Mukden on the 10th August, but could not arrive at the front until about the 27th. The 1st European Corps was also on the way out to the Far East, and its leading battalions commenced detraining at Liao-yang on the 28th August (German official account).

which the Viceroy agreed to send to the front—instead of into the Pri-Amur<sup>1</sup> district, as was proposed earlier—should have been beginning to arrive in Liao-yang. Orders were therefore issued to fortify an advanced position half a march from Liao-yang in addition to the main position at that place, and for this time was required.”<sup>2</sup>

According to the Russian General Staff conferences his general plans were as follows:<sup>3</sup>

In view of the necessity of gaining time in order to complete the entrenchments and to permit of the arrival of reinforcements he desired :

1. To maintain himself in the positions Anshan-chan—Lang-tzu-shan—An-ping in order to reconnoitre the enemy.

2. To retire to the “advanced positions” of Liao-

<sup>1</sup>In the neighbourhood of Vladivostok, that is. The Viceroy evidently intended to execute his scheme of sending a detachment, based on Vladivostok, against the Japanese right flank (see chap. vii. p. 253). We see that the Viceroy was here controlling the actual distribution of troops, a matter generally admitted to be entirely beyond the province of the statesman. In this connection we might quote Marshal Jourdan : “The Government which prescribes to the General in Chief the distribution of his forces, indicating to him the positions he must occupy, places him in an embarrassing situation ; for, if he obeys literally and is beaten, he is told that he ought to have made such alterations as were rendered necessary by the circumstances. If, on the contrary, he does not obey literally and is beaten, not only is he blamed, but is accused of insubordination” (*French Official History of 1870-1*, “Army of Chalons”).

<sup>2</sup>*The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. ii. p. 228. This refers to the line Ma-yeh-tun—693—Wu-chia-kou—Hsia-pu. The fortification of the positions at Anshanchan and An-ping had been commenced in March, 1904.

<sup>3</sup>*The Russian Official History* dealing with the period immediately prior to the Battle of Liao-yang has not yet been published.

yang, that is, to the line Ma-yeh-tun—Wu-chia-kou—Hsia-pu.

3. Utilising the bridge-head, to manœuvre on either bank of the river, and to seize the opportune moment to fall with superior forces on a portion of the Japanese.

Here we have a wise and sensible plan. General Kuropatkin desired to draw the Japanese into ground of his own choice, there to separate them, and then overwhelm one portion.

General Bilderling, however, who had just been given command of the Eastern Group, and General Sluchevski, who commanded the 10th Corps, both strongly opposed the idea of fighting south of Liao-yang. The former stated that it was necessary to withdraw his troops to Liao-yang without fighting; while the latter urged the desirability of retreating past Liao-yang and concentrating between that place and Mukden.

"These officers," General Kuropatkin writes, "reiterated the same opinions still more forcibly early in August, when the difficulty of moving their troops towards Liao-yang became greatly increased by the heavy rains. The Viceroy, who was much perturbed about the fate of Port Arthur, by the news of the unfortunate result of the naval operations on August 10th, and whose fears were increased by Stessel's highly alarmist reports, was at the same time urging me (August 15th) to assist the fortress and make an advance of some sort—though it were only a demonstration—towards Hai-Cheng."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, p. 228.

Thus we see the unfortunate General Kuropatkin pulled in opposite directions by his subordinate generals on the one hand and by the Viceroy on the other. Ultimately, according to the German official account, General Kuropatkin referred the matter to the Czar, asking if he were permitted to attack. In reply he was told that, being on the spot, he was the best judge; but that, in case of defeat, he would incur a heavy responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

Now let us turn to these naval operations at Port Arthur, and see what had occurred at that place to increase the alarm of the Viceroy.

The garrison of Port Arthur had managed to maintain a precarious communication with the outside world by means of Chinese junks which ran the blockade, and also by means of one fast torpedo boat that they possessed. The messages were carried backwards and forwards to Ying-Kou while that place remained in Russian hands, and afterwards to Chefoo. Thus the Viceroy was fairly well informed as to the progress of events in the fortress; while the garrison, which from time to time received copies of papers—notably the *Chefoo Press*—was also informed as to the operations in the field. Thus the news of Telissu and Ta-shih-chiao reached the garrison shortly after those battles had taken place. The

<sup>1</sup>The date on which these telegrams passed is uncertain, but it seems probable that, at the same time, the Viceroy received a hint to give General Kuropatkin a free hand; for during the Battle of Liao-yang General Kuropatkin appears to have enjoyed immunity from interference. Compare with the Czar's answer to the Viceroy, chap. vii. p. 251.

news, naturally, did not tend to raise the spirits of the garrison.

In this connection we must endeavour to understand the psychological attitude of the garrison of a besieged fortress. Solitary confinement is a terrible punishment, and is apt to destroy a man's mind. A body of men besieged in a fortress are practically subjected to a type of solitary confinement; and hence it is, apparently, that we so commonly see, in the history of sieges, the "nerve" of the garrison give way long before there is any real danger of the fall of the place either to assault or starvation. This nerve depends, more in fortress warfare than in the open field, on one man, the Commandant. If he is resolute and determined to fight to a finish, and in the last resort to destroy the fortifications, the armament, and the magazines, and to sally forth to cut his way through the besiegers, his spirit will be reflected throughout the garrison. But if his nerve gives way, so will the nerve of the garrison. When, however, a fortress is commanded by a Council of War, then its plight is almost hopeless; for it is a platitude that "a Council of War never fights." Port Arthur was commanded by a Council. There were General Stessel, the Commandant of the Peninsula, General Smirnov, the Commandant of the fortress, and Admiral Vitgeft, the admiral commanding the fleet. As the inevitable result, friction, irresolution, and indecision held, as we have seen, full sway. But, worse than that, the senior officer, General Stessel, had long since, as we have also

seen, given up all hope of defending the fortress successfully.

It is always the object of the besieger to induce a feeling of extreme pessimism in the besieged; and, with that object in view, he will seek to make the solitary confinement as rigorous as possible, while permitting such information only as will tend to reduce the besieged to the depths of despair to leak into the fortress. It has been a common custom to send into the fortress a flag of truce solely in order to give to the garrison an item of unpleasant news, or to summon the garrison to surrender on the grounds that its outlook is hopeless, and that the magnanimous and chivalrous besieger desires to spare the garrison and the peaceful inhabitants further bloodshed and the horrors incidental to an assault. Hence it was that the news of Telissu and Ta-shih-chiao "penetrated everywhere, into the town, into the fortress, into the squadron—by means of Chinese." And this in spite of the fact that "arrangements had been made 'from above' to ensure that no news of the operations of the army could reach the garrison." As a result, "hopes of any success on land became mere pious aspirations," so far as the garrison was concerned.

But an item of information, which the Japanese would certainly have withheld if possible, had also penetrated into the fortress. "A decided rumour" gained ground that "a second squadron was being fitted out at Cronstadt, and that it might start any day." This rumour was, however, generally dis-

believed. The pessimists did not believe that Russia possessed another squadron worthy of the name, and, in any case, they pointed out, "only a homogeneous, well-drilled, well organised squadron" would serve the purpose. "If any one imagined," they continued, "that a badly-organised 'armada' would do as well—why it would hardly get as far as Port Arthur!" True prophets, these.

There were also "a small number of optimists." These maintained that it would be possible to train a new squadron while preparations were being made for its long journey to the Far East; but the pessimists quoted from the writings of the lamented Makarov, "One cannot hope to carry out in war anything which has not been learnt in peace."<sup>1</sup> This was the general state of mind in the Russian fleet in Port Arthur. "The fate of Port Arthur is sealed. If we want to save the squadron we must go to Vladivostok—it is criminal to leave the ships here to be pounded to pieces by the shore guns."<sup>1</sup>

On the 26th July the Japanese assaulted the "Position of the Passes" in front of Port Arthur. On that date the Russians held a fortified line, stretching across the peninsula from Lao-tso Shan, on the south, to Ying-cheng-tzu Bay, on the north. The right of this line was eight, while the left was twelve, miles distant from Port Arthur town and harbour.

The 1st Division and 1st Reserve Brigade and a column of the 9th Division attacked the salient at

<sup>1</sup> "Rasplata."



Height 1100 from both north and south; the remainder of the 9th Division attacked the centre of the Russian line; while the 11th Division attacked Ta-po Shan and Lao-tso Shan. The 11th Division was almost immediately successful in capturing the pass between Ta-po Shan and Lao-tso Shan; but was then hard put to it to retain its conquest. Its success, however, threatened the Russian line of retreat. Elsewhere the Japanese were repulsed, though some of their ships of war bombarded the extreme left of the Russian line from Ying-cheng-tzu Bay. On the Russian right, on the other hand, the Russians had the assistance of ships of war which had crept along shore inside the mine-fields. Throughout the following day, the 27th July, the Japanese attacks were continued, their principal efforts being directed against the salient at height 1100 and against Ta-po Shan. This latter locality was captured during the night of the 27th-28th, when, owing to the darkness, the Russian ships of war could not assist the defence; and the Russians on Lao-tso Shan, finding their flank turned, evacuated that hill as well.

General Fock, who commanded on the battlefield, considering that further resistance would end in the retreat being intercepted, asked for, and obtained, permission from General Stessel to retreat to the line B-B. So convinced, however, had the Russians been of their power to hold the line A-A, that they had neglected to thoroughly prepare the line B-B for defence. The *Kao-liang* had not been cut, and

afforded a covered approach for the Japanese to within a few yards of the defences. The Russians hoped that they would be given time in which to clear a field of fire; but in this they were disappointed; for the Japanese attacked them again at daylight on the 30th, devoting their attention to the Wolf Hills. This point was captured at the first assault; and the Russians immediately retreated within the permanent defences. In the capture of these positions, between the 26th and 31st July, the Japanese lost 4000 men.

But the Russians still held the two points of Ta-Ku-Shan and Hsiao-Ku-Shan. These hills were bombarded on the 7th August, assaulted, and captured, on the 8th. These successes gave the Japanese the power to bring unaimed fire to bear on the town and harbour, and on the ships of war within it. Batteries had already been constructed on the Wolf Hills, and on the 7th the bombardment of the harbour commenced. It was continued on the 8th, and the 'Retvisan' and 'Tzesarevich' were hit, though not seriously damaged. From this date the close siege of the fortress commenced, the Japanese gradually working their way forward and establishing themselves in close proximity to the Russian works.

As we have seen, throughout July and the first week in August the Viceroy was in communication with Admiral Vitgeft; and the correspondence terminated with, it is said, a direct order from the Czar to Admiral Vitgeft to put to sea and make his way to Vladivostok, avoiding an action if possible. When,

therefore, on the 7th August, the first Japanese shells fell in the harbour, Admiral Vitgeft decided to execute his orders. In the first instance, however, it was necessary to replace on board ship the guns which had been taken for the land defences, and it was not until the 10th that the fleet sailed.

The Vladivostok squadron also received orders to put to sea to create a diversion. This squadron had, on several occasions, come out of Vladivostok to commit depredations on the Japanese commerce and over-sea lines of communication. Between February 10th and 15th it had threatened Hakodate. Between June 12th and 20th it had come to within 150 miles of Tsushima and destroyed or captured four merchant vessels. Between June 28th and July 5th it destroyed two Japanese transports at Gensan, and bombarded that place. On each of these occasions the Russian squadron made good its escape from the Japanese cruiser squadron, which was guarding the Straits of Korea. On July 18th the Russian squadron passed through the Tsugaru Straits and steamed as far south as Yokohama, where it captured or destroyed four Japanese merchantmen. This last raid resulted in considerable panic in Japan and in an outcry against the Admiral commanding the Japanese cruiser squadron, whose house in Tokio was burned. The Japanese cruiser squadron was hastily brought to the Inland sea. On August 14th, however, the Russian squadron was caught about 150 miles north of Tsushima, the 'Rurik' being sunk. The remaining vessels escaped, the Japanese admiral discontinuing the pursuit in

order to guard against the passage of the Straits of Korea by the Russian Port Arthur fleet.

On the 10th August the Port Arthur squadron put to sea. It was promptly attacked by the Japanese; and the battle lasted from 1 p.m. till sunset. The Russian fleet was scattered; three battleships were seriously damaged; one battleship, the 'Tzesarevich,' three cruisers, and three destroyers escaped to various neutral ports, where they were finally hunted down and destroyed or dismantled, while the remainder were driven back to Port Arthur.

This last was the event which had aroused the serious alarm of the Viceroy, and induced him to urge General Kuropatkin to "make an advance of some sort—though it were only a demonstration." If we turn up the daily press of this period we shall find that the Japanese widely advertised their assaults on Port Arthur, as well as the bombardment, reporting especially, and exaggerating, the damage which had been inflicted on the Russian ships of war in the harbour. More than that, on the 11th August they sent in a flag of truce offering to permit all non-combatants to leave the fortress. The offer was perhaps dictated by "pure benevolence and goodness," as the Japanese claimed at the time; and, certainly, no nation could have conducted war with greater humanity. It is not often that a besieger will permit non-combatants to leave a fortress, and thereby reduce the number of mouths to be fed. There have been cases in history—in the old unregenerate days—when the non-combatants, including numerous women and children,

thrust forth by the garrison, and driven back by the besiegers, have perished miserably between the hostile forces. There has, of late, been an example in Tripoli, where military exigencies have been held to justify the severest reprisals against a turbulent but half-armed populace. But war is war; and there is good reason to believe that the Japanese, like all nations which have made a close study of war, would, in case of vital necessity, harden their hearts to take any action which might become necessary for the accomplishment of their designs. For any other course is unfair to the people who are making cruel sacrifices of blood and treasure in hopes of victory. It is not possible to "play the game" both to one's own people and to the enemy. In this case, however, the Japanese intended to conquer the fortress by siege and assault; they did not purpose to adopt the dilatory process of starvation, and the reduction of "useless mouths" in the garrison would not be calculated to hamper their operations. The benevolent offer was, indeed, calculated to assist the Japanese. They had already discovered that their information as to the Russian works was very imperfect, both insufficient and inaccurate; and if they permitted a large number of non-combatants, who would assuredly include many of their spies, to pass out of the fortress, they would undoubtedly obtain much information of value. It was on these grounds that the Russians curtly refused to consider the suggestion. Again, the mere fact of offering a safe conduct to the non-combatants would tell the world

in general—and Admiral Alexiev in particular—that the siege of the fortress was about to seriously commence; and that if the fortress was to be relieved at all, it must be relieved at once. That belief would be calculated to induce the Russians to do two disastrous things: to send out the Baltic fleet in haste, ill-equipped and unready; and to force General Kuropatkin's hand and oblige him to assume the offensive before he was ready, and so perhaps grant an opportunity to the 1st Japanese Army to seize his communications behind him. The latter was the only chance by which the Japanese could hope—in view of their numerical inferiority and their small force of cavalry—to win a decisive victory; and, as we shall see, the information which was received by the Russians during August was calculated to induce General Kuropatkin to assume the offensive down the railway line. On the 16th August the Japanese formally demanded the surrender of Port Arthur, publishing the news to the world, as they had previously published their benevolent offer.

But General Kuropatkin, fortified, perhaps, by the Czar's telegram, was strong enough to resist the pressure brought on him to advance, though he was not strong enough to adopt the suggestions of his subordinate generals and the promptings of his own mind to evacuate Liao-yang.

Nevertheless, the representations of the Viceroy had apparently unsettled General Kuropatkin's plans, and resulted in the issue of conflicting instructions to his subordinate generals. On the 7th August he had

informed General Bilderling, who had been appointed to command the Eastern Group, that he intended to fight a decisive battle in the Anshanchan and An-ping positions; but two days later he informed General Ivanov, who commanded the 3rd Siberians, that he was merely to hold these positions with rearguards and was not to accept a serious battle. General Ivanov thereupon applied to General Bilderling for definite instructions, and was referred to General Kuropatkin. He was now told that he was to hold the positions "solely to gain the time necessary for the complete concentration of the army with a view to the assumption of the offensive." General Kuropatkin, in answer to enquiries by his corps commanders, sought to explain the manner in which the Russian troops were to execute the extremely difficult mission he had given them. They were to avoid a desperate struggle and simultaneously to hold their positions and gain time, but to retreat to the main defences at Liao-yang if seriously attacked, without permitting themselves to be demoralised or disorganised.

On these instructions the subordinate generals immediately commenced to make preparations for retreat, and their action appears to have been entirely approved by General Kuropatkin.

On the 7th August the "Manchurian deluge" commenced;<sup>1</sup> and, within twenty-four hours, fords had disappeared, rivers and even brooks had become impassable to vehicles, roads were almost impracticable, guns sinking in the mud to their axles. The con-

<sup>1</sup> Some accounts state that the rains commenced on the 5th August.

dition of the country was such that military operations had become almost impossible. An immediate and general Japanese advance was now no longer to be feared; but, on the other hand, the advanced Russian detachments, which had been cut off from all support by the flooded rivers, gave cause for considerable anxiety. In the meantime Russian reinforcements had been continually arriving, and General Kuropatkin's anxiety to gain time appears to have given place to a desire to withdraw his forces into the main lines of defence undemoralised by defeat. He also urged the corps commanders to display more activity, to engage in constant enterprises against the Japanese, especially by night, and to capture prisoners. He even offered monetary rewards for the capture of prisoners, 100 roubles for a private soldier, 300 roubles for an officer.<sup>1</sup> The offer of rewards for the capture of prisoners throws an interesting sidelight on the peace training of the Russian army. A well-educated army of which all ranks understand that its chief hope of victory depends on its commander, that that commander is at a serious disadvantage if he lacks accurate intelligence of the enemy, that prisoners are a valuable source from which information may be obtained, will require no rewards to use its utmost efforts to capture prisoners. Troops learn to capture prisoners during the field training of the smallest units, and a body of troops which neglects so obvious a part of its duty cannot be well trained.

<sup>1</sup> *Russian Official History*.



Between the 19th and 24th August the Japanese delivered their first general assault on Port Arthur, again advertising their operations in the European press. The attack commenced with a great bombardment of the Russian works by the Japanese siege batteries. Under cover of this fire the Japanese infantry advanced to assault. Fighting, at many points hand to hand, continued almost without intermission for five days and nights. At many points the Japanese penetrated the Russian defences, only to be driven out by counter-attack or annihilated by the Russian fire. On the 24th the last assault was delivered and was repulsed. Two minor works only, the Pan-lung redoubts, had been captured. And even these two redoubts could only be held with difficulty; for they were commanded at short range, some 500 yards, by a Russian battery armed with six-inch guns, while they were also subjected to indirect fire from howitzers and other guns. The Japanese losses amounted to over 15,000 officers and men.<sup>1</sup> But the failure of the assault was not known either in the Russian army or in Europe; or rather it was generally believed that the Japanese were confident of success, and that the fall of the fortress was now a matter of weeks, or perhaps even days. The relief of the fortress was more than ever urgent. It was only on the 30th August that the repulse of the Japanese became known to the Russians.

<sup>1</sup>The *Russian Official History* dealing with the siege has not yet been published, and the Russian losses during this assault are unknown.

In the meantime, on the 23rd August, when the assault on Port Arthur was at its height, General Kuropatkin suddenly altered all his plans. He decided to fight a "decisive battle" in the positions at Anshanchan and An-ping with a view to assuming the offensive if possible. "Under these circumstances,"<sup>1</sup> he wrote to General Sluchevski, "I do not think we need confine ourselves to fighting rearguard actions in the positions occupied by the 10th and 3rd Siberian Army Corps and by the troops on the southern front. I am resolved to fight in these positions with all the forces apportioned to their defence, to beat the enemy back, and to assume the offensive should a favourable opportunity present itself." In his former plan General Kuropatkin had intended to separate his enemy's forces and then overwhelm one portion; in this new plan he proposes to separate his own forces, to exhaust the enemy with the advanced portion, and then to strike back with the reserve portion. It will be seen that there is a vital difference of principle between these two ideas.

The *Russian Official History* makes no mention of the Japanese assaults on Port Arthur in connection with this sudden change of plan; yet it seems unlikely that this tremendous feat of arms, a determined assault on the permanent works of a first-class fortress, with which the whole world was ringing, should have been unknown to, or have passed unheeded by, the Viceroy and General Kuropatkin, or could have failed to influence their plans. After all, the possession of

<sup>1</sup> The arrival of reinforcements.

Port Arthur was the one thing of all others for which the Russians were fighting.

The *Russian Official History*, however, ascribes the change of plan to the fact that, by the 23rd, six regiments of the 5th Siberians had arrived south of Mukden, and had been formed into the reserve of the army, that the remainder of this corps had arrived at Harbin, and that the head of the 1st European Corps was about to arrive at that place. The Russian General Staff Conferences, on the other hand, give an additional reason, namely, the inaction of the Japanese during the preceding three weeks, together with the reports of agents to the effect that the Japanese intended to stand on the defensive.<sup>1</sup>

It would be as well, perhaps, to examine these reasons.

A sudden change of plan at a critical moment often proves fatal. Subordinate commanders are apt to regard it as indecision, and to lose faith in their chief. The loss of such confidence involves a general loss of morale. It is extremely unlikely that General Kuropatkin would willingly have taken any action calculated to reduce the morale of his troops, none too high as it was. We can gauge the morale of the Russian army by the letters which General Kuropatkin found it necessary to write to his subordinate commanders. It is evident that he was losing faith in many of them. When a chief loses faith in his subordinates, and shows it, they usually make a point of losing faith in him—it is but human nature.

<sup>1</sup> *The Conferences, Preliminaries of Liao-yang*, pp. 18, 32.

We know also that General Kuropatkin's idea had been to avoid a decisive battle until he could fight with a considerable numerical superiority on his side. The reinforcements—the six regiments forty miles distant at Mukden, and the remainder of the corps over 350 miles distant at Harbin—would not even bring his army up—according to his estimate—to an equality with the Japanese.

Hence, the first reason given above, the reinforcements which would lessen the Japanese numerical superiority, was altogether insufficient to compensate for the probable loss of morale involved in a change of plan against the wishes of his subordinate commanders.

But at the same time as the Russian reinforcements were arriving, information was received<sup>1</sup> which indicated that three to four Divisions had been withdrawn from the 2nd Japanese Army and sent to Port Arthur; that these were to be replaced by troops from Japan which were to disembark at Ying-Kou; and that the troops of the 2nd Japanese Army expected and feared a Russian offensive against Hai-Cheng. This information lent colour to the

<sup>1</sup> This information emanated from Chinese spies employed by the Russians, one of them being an officer in the Chinese service, another a "correspondent attached to the Headquarters Staff of General Oku" (*Russian Official History*). It is not difficult to understand that the information furnished by such agents was probably given to them of set purpose by the Japanese General Staff. See also the British Press of this period. The Japanese intention to capture Port Arthur at all costs and to stand on the defensive elsewhere was freely expressed; while, day by day, there were constant reports of the withdrawal of large forces from the 2nd and 4th Japanese Armies to reinforce the besieging army.

report that the Japanese intended to stand on the defensive.

Now, this fact, taken in conjunction with the critical situation of Port Arthur, and the strongly expressed desires of the Viceroy,<sup>1</sup> was calculated to carry great weight. Let us endeavour to look at the situation with General Kuropatkin's eyes. He desired to fight the Japanese on ground of his own choice; he therefore desired them to advance, and to push a portion of their force across the Tai-tzu River. He had made all his preparations. Then, suddenly, he heard that the Japanese were assaulting Port Arthur, and everything pointed to the fact that they were devoting their full attention to the capture of the fortress, and that the condition of the fortress was critical. At the same time he received information—from "reliable sources"—that the Japanese field armies in front of him did not intend to advance, but were standing on the defensive and feared to be attacked. What more natural? The Japanese were, evidently, concentrating all their efforts on one thing at a time. They intended to capture Port Arthur in the first instance, and then to bring up their besieging army for the decisive battle.

The Viceroy insisted that the Japanese forces at the front had been exaggerated; while the Quartermaster General of the army and certain officers of the General Staff were convinced that the Japanese were diverting large forces from their 2nd and 4th Armies towards Port Arthur. On the 19th and 20th August

<sup>1</sup> See the *Conferences, Liao-yang*, Appendix No. 1, p. 146.

it had been reported that another Japanese division had left Hai-Cheng for Port Arthur; and on the following days further items of information arrived which served to corroborate this intelligence. On the 25th August, for instance, Chinese spies reported that Oku's army had been reduced to 30,000 men; while on the 26th a great concentration of Japanese troops was reported at Telissu. These were said to be suffering from cholera. On the 27th it was again reported that Oku's army was only 40,000 strong. Reinforcements for the Japanese field armies were also reported to be on their way from Japan. Would it not be wise to attack the Japanese at once, if only as a diversion in favour of Port Arthur? What would be said if the Russian field army remained inactive and calmly awaited the fall of the fortress, the possession of which was one of the primary causes of the war? The Russian army and its Commander-in-chief would be for ever disgraced!

We can imagine the Viceroy urging this view, and at the same time, being a sailor, maintaining that the chief object of the Japanese was the capture of the Russian fleet in Port Arthur, that Port Arthur must fall if not relieved, and that the responsibility would rest on the man who refused to move to its relief. More than that, there was the situation in Russia to be considered; and the Viceroy, the statesman, would naturally regard it as of as much importance as the strategical situation. What result might the fall of Port Arthur, and the inaction of the Russian army, have on the internal situation in

Russia? It might cause a revolution. Matters were looking serious, as it was. An effort, even though it were unsuccessful, to save the fortress might relieve the tension.<sup>1</sup> Is it to be wondered at that General Kuropatkin gave way—after all, was not the Viceroy Commander-in-chief?

“The Japanese, after having, literally, awaited the adoption of a resolution of this nature by the Russian Commander-in-chief, assumed the offensive on the 24th August.”<sup>2</sup> Thus the Russian General Staff is convinced that the Japanese knew of the Russian plan as soon as it was finally settled. But, as a matter of fact, Marshal Oyama issued his orders for the Japanese offensive on the 23rd, the same day as that on which General Kuropatkin changed his mind. Nevertheless, it is possible that the Japanese were fully informed of the debates on the subject of the Russian plans which appear to have taken place;<sup>3</sup> and it also seems probable that the false information which was responsible for the sudden

<sup>1</sup>It is noticeable that neither the *Russian Official History* nor the *Russian General Staff Conferences* make the smallest mention of the revolutionary movement in Russia, which, nevertheless, evidently exercised an important influence on Russian strategy—as is within the knowledge of all who read the papers while the war was in progress. General Kuropatkin, however, in his book, does mention the unfortunate state of affairs in Russia as increasing the difficulty of his task.

<sup>2</sup>*Conferences*. This decision was mentioned in the *Times* of 24th August, 1904.

<sup>3</sup>The Russians appear to have been in the habit of establishing their headquarters in public hotels in the larger towns. The Japanese, on the other hand, are said to have taken possession of a small village, removing all the inhabitants, and placing a *cordon* of pickets around it. The Russian method invites the disclosure of secrets.

change of plan—to the effect that the Japanese intended to stand on the defensive, and that troops of the 2nd and 4th Armies were being despatched to Port Arthur—emanated directly from the Japanese General Staff, and was sent to the Russians through their spies with the express purpose of inducing them to fight to a finish in their weakly fortified and extended positions at Anshanchan and An-ping ; or to come forward out of them and assume the offensive down the railway line.

The whole situation is extremely interesting as illustrating the battle of wits between opposing commanders, and also as showing the difficulties with which a commander has to contend in his efforts to reconcile his plans with the views of his government and, perhaps, with those of his subordinate commanders.

There is some reason to doubt, however, whether General Kuropatkin did in reality change his plans, or whether he merely expressed his intention to assume the offensive to pacify the Viceroy, the Government in Russia, and the Russian people. For it is noteworthy that though he mentioned the idea of an offensive to the commanders of the 3rd Siberians and the 10th Corps, and called on them to elaborate plans, yet he made no mention of it to the commanders of his Eastern and Southern Groups, Generals Bilderling and Zarubaiev, instructing these merely to defend the advanced position obstinately. General Bilderling, similarly, merely directed the 3rd Siberians and 10th Corps to defend their



positions obstinately; but added that, in case it was impossible to stop the enemy, they were to retreat and occupy sections (to which they were detailed) in the main lines of defence.

Let us now study the general situation from the Japanese point of view.

The Battle of Liao-yang commenced on the 26th August,<sup>1</sup> the Japanese troops being put into motion with a view to the attack as early as the 23rd. And yet between the 19th and 24th a general assault had been delivered on Port Arthur. Three whole divisions and two reserve brigades were employed at Port Arthur. Here was a case of the conspicuous absence of the concentration of effort at the decisive point. It is generally admitted that there is but one fundamental principle of success in war—"the concentration of superior force at the decisive point"; and it has, further, been generally maintained that the wisest method of putting this principle into execution is by the "concentration of every available man, horse, and gun at the decisive point." And yet here we have the Japanese apparently flying in the face of Providence, and of the principle of success!

Which was the decisive point—the Russian field

<sup>1</sup> In most accounts the Battle of Liao-yang is considered to have commenced on the 30th August when the Japanese attacked the Russians in the "advanced positions" of Liao-yang on the line Ma-yeh-tun—Hsia-pu. The author, prefers, however, to include the fighting between the 26th and 28th August on the Anshanchan and An-ping positions in the Battle of Liao-yang, inasmuch as it formed part of one great manœuvre, and exercised an important influence on the result of the battle.

army, or Port Arthur? If the former, would it not be wise to merely invest the fortress and concentrate all available force against the field army? If the latter, would it not be wise to "contain" the Russian field army and to concentrate all available force against the fortress? Here is, evidently, a knotty problem, one well worthy of examination.

One division could hold the isthmus at Nan-shan, and, in conjunction with the Japanese fleet, effectually sever the communication between Port Arthur and the Russian field army. Then, when the Russian field army had been beaten, the fall of the fortress would be merely a matter of time. But Dalny and Talienwan had been captured as the result of the Battle of Nan-shan; and these ports were necessary as bases for the 2nd Army, and could not therefore be evacuated. Hence, one division would not suffice to hold both the isthmus and these two harbours, for the Russian garrison was known to consist of two divisions. At least two divisions must therefore be left for the investment of Port Arthur. Would it not be wiser to employ three divisions, to drive the garrison inside its permanent works? Then, if necessary, two divisions could be left for the close investment of the fortress, and the third could be despatched to reinforce the field army.

But it was possible—probable, indeed—that the Russians would not stand to fight a decisive battle at Liao-yang. They would be likely to await further reinforcements. In that case the close siege of Port Arthur must be deferred until the Russian field

army could be brought to battle and defeated. That would mean that the fortress might never fall, except, perhaps, in the end, from starvation. Could the Japanese afford to risk so dilatory a process? Could they even afford to lose time in making themselves masters of Port Arthur?

There was the Russian "fleet in being." Of what value was it? The Japanese must have known well, after the initial blow had been struck, that there was but little danger to be feared from that fleet—Admiral Togo had, indeed, reported that it was demoralised; certainly, after the sortie of the 10th August the matter was beyond dispute.

But another fleet was preparing in Europe, and that fleet might make its way out to the Far East and into Port Arthur.

There were many who, at the time, seemed to imagine that if this fleet could but get into Port Arthur its mere presence in that fortress would give it "command of the sea." But that was exactly the point; a fleet of any strength would be too big to get into the harbour. It was absurd to suppose that it could arrive at Port Arthur without having suffered damage; the mine-fields alone were a serious obstacle to negotiate. In any case, after so long a voyage numerous repairs would be necessary, and to be obliged to fight without effecting those repairs would be to fight at a serious disadvantage. But there was practically no dockyard accommodation at Port Arthur; the Russians had already been put to extraordinary shifts to repair the vessels which had

been damaged in the actions with the Japanese; and the harbour was already under the fire of the Japanese siege guns—unaimed fire, it is true, but likely to be effective if the harbour were crowded with vessels. In addition to these points the Russians had no coaling stations, and any neutral nation permitting the use of its coaling stations would commit a breach of neutrality and bring Great Britain into the arena. The Russian ships must consequently fill every crevice with coal, and certainly could not carry in addition supplies of food and war material, and reinforcements for the garrison. Doubtless they would endeavour to bring supplies in merchant vessels; but these would hamper the movement of the fleet, and not only render it more vulnerable to Japanese attack, but reduce its chances of escaping observation. Still less would there be room in Port Arthur for these merchant vessels.

If, therefore, on arrival at Port Arthur, the combined Russian fleets determined to strike for the command of the sea, several weeks, or even months, must elapse before they could be in a condition to do so; and, in the meantime, the crowded harbour and roads would be brought under the fire of the Japanese both from the land side and seaward. If at such a moment the close siege of the fortress commenced, the new fleet might well be forced to immobilise itself to strengthen the defences, or might be forced to put to sea and give battle in its unready condition. And, in any case, it would take about three days to get into or out of the harbour.

Hence, the threat from the Baltic fleet would not become serious for a very long time, even supposing it managed to escape observation and arrive at Port Arthur without opposition—a very improbable contingency.

In view of these considerations it was, indeed, extremely improbable that the Baltic fleet would, in any circumstances, make for Port Arthur, unless it could decisively beat the Japanese fleet *en route*.

Hence the naval situation alone would not seem to have demanded the immediate capture of Port Arthur. Nevertheless, it was certainly desirable on naval grounds that the beaten fleet within it should be captured before the arrival of the Baltic fleet; the Port Arthur fleet, beaten and demoralised though it was, could still not be entirely disregarded. It was necessary to watch it, and that would involve a separation of the Japanese forces. Chance might also assist the Russians; the Japanese might suffer further losses, which they could ill afford, from mines or the fortune of war; and, in spite of the notorious inefficiency of the Baltic fleet, the Japanese force might prove to be insufficient to cope with it decisively. It was desirable, with a view to assuring the absolute security of the Japanese nation for a generation to come, to not only beat the Baltic fleet on its arrival, but to annihilate it.

Nevertheless, so far there are by no means sufficient reasons why the Japanese should run contrary to the recognised idea, and regard a locality as the decisive point in preference to the hostile field

army.<sup>1</sup> There were, however, other considerations, both sentimental and eminently practical. Great sentimental interest was attached to the capture of Port Arthur by the whole Japanese nation. It would constitute in the eyes of the nation as a whole an emblem, an assurance, of ultimate victory. More than that, it would constitute an actual assurance not only of ultimate victory, but of complete national security, as against the Russians, for some twenty-five to fifty years to come. The isthmus at Nan-shan had been proved to be almost impregnable; and in the hands of the Japanese, with its fortifications completed and its flanks defended by the fire of ships of war, it would indeed be impregnable. Thus, even if the Japanese field army were defeated, the Russians could not hope to regain possession of Port Arthur until they had regained command of the sea. But in order to regain that command not only must they concentrate a sufficient naval force in the Far East, but they must obtain ice-free harbours—harbours not cut off from the Yellow Sea, as was Vladivostok—and construct dockyards and arsenals. These are by no means to be disregarded in any problem of the command of the sea, and their acquisition and construction would require

<sup>1</sup> It is an important point, for there are many who maintain that the capture of the Russian fleet was the sole reason for pressing so vigorously the siege of Port Arthur. If we wish to test this point, let us suppose that the Russian fleet had originally taken refuge in Vladivostok in place of Port Arthur. Would the Japanese then have besieged Vladivostok in place of Port Arthur, or would they have besieged both places simultaneously? Would they also, at the same time, have attacked the Russian field army at Liao-yang?

many years of peace preparation. Such harbours were only to be found in Korea, and to obtain possession of these the Russians must win victory on land.

But the Japanese, securely posted on the Kuan-tung Peninsula, as well as with the control of the Yellow Sea, would be on the flank of a Russian advance overland on Korea; and, based on Korea, would be on the flank of a Russian advance on the Kuan-tung Peninsula. If, then, the Russians, having defeated the Japanese field armies, endeavoured to advance into Korea, they must detach a powerful force to prevent the egress of the Japanese from the Kuan-tung Peninsula; another powerful force to watch Ying-Kou and the coast about Kaiping, and guard against Japanese landings; a powerful reserve at Liaoyang or Hai-Cheng; and, in addition to these, the force advancing on Korea must be of a strength sufficient to cope with the whole Japanese army. Each one of these Russian forces would be liable to be attacked by the bulk of the Japanese army. In view of the actual strength of the Japanese forces, the Russians would be obliged to concentrate a force in Southern Manchuria of one to two million men if they desired to reconquer either Korea or Port Arthur, without, in the first instance, regaining command of the sea. But the maintenance of such a force 5000 to 6000 miles distant from Russia in Europe, and connected with the home territory by one single line of railway, would be a task which must inevitably strain the resources of the Russian Empire to the

uttermost—a strain which would involve a vast increase of taxation, and almost certainly result, sooner or later, in revolution.

Hence, by the capture of Port Arthur, Japan would gain so strong a position on the mainland that Russia single-handed could only hope to eject her with many, probably a score, or even, half a century, of years of preparation. In view of the jealousies which always exist between the great nations of the world, it was unlikely that Russia could a second time form a coalition to force Japan to evacuate Port Arthur. The situation, however, would be quite different if the Kuan-tung Peninsula, with the harbours of Dalny and Port Arthur, remained in the hands of the Russians. Permanent fortifications would quickly be erected at Nan-shan and Dalny, and batteries constructed overlooking all the possible landing-places in the Kuan-tung Peninsula. The Russians would be in possession of a second naval base in the Far East; they would, in a few years, build up a second, more powerful, more efficient fleet; they would improve their railway system; they would oblige Japan to enter upon a tremendous competition in preparation for war; and with their vast resources in men and wealth, that contest could have but one ending.

The possession of Port Arthur was essential for the future security and welfare of the Japanese nation.

And this brings us to another and equally important reason why Port Arthur should be captured as soon as possible. France was the ally of Russia; Great Britain was the ally of Japan. If either France



or Great Britain committed a breach of neutrality, these two nations, by their agreements with their respective allies, must enter into the arena and fight with one another. But neither of these nations had the smallest desire to enter upon a war with one another. The reverse was, indeed, the case ; for each nation was in fear of the growth and ambitions of the great German power ; and latterly, in order to avert the possibility of a conflict with each other, the two nations had drawn closer the ties of friendship which were finally to result in the *entente cordiale*. Rather than go to war with one another, it was probable that they would join hands in order to remove the cause of war ; that is, to put a termination to the struggle between their respective allies, Russia and Japan. If that occurred, and if at that time Japan were not in possession of Port Arthur, she could never hope to gain possession of the place. And there existed serious danger that such an intervention might come about at any moment. Russia, having been defeated in every engagement both on land and sea, seeing Port Arthur and the prospects of ultimate success slipping from her grasp day by day, seriously inconvenienced by the revolutionary troubles in Russia, was evidently desirous of terminating the war, provided she could accomplish it without further loss of prestige and without relinquishing Port Arthur. There were two methods of terminating the war : one, by submission to the Japanese. In this case she must admit defeat, suffer a serious loss of prestige, and relinquish Port Arthur and her hold on Manchuria. The other method was

to embroil Great Britain with France before Port Arthur had fallen. It seemed evident at the time from the Press of the period that this was Russia's hope, and that intention will perhaps become more apparent later.

But Germany was also concerned in embroiling Great Britain with France. In assisting in this design she could regain the goodwill of Russia. As we have seen, moreover, there is good reason to suppose that, at this time, German projects of expansion were directed against the British Empire. Great Britain had suffered severely in the long and costly war in South Africa. The Boers had been conquered but not subdued; and, at that time, they would have welcomed another opportunity of striking for their old so-called freedom. If Great Britain could now be embroiled with France she would again be attacked by the Boers, and her power be so reduced as to render her insignificant as a competitor to Germany. The attention of France would, moreover, be finally diverted from Alsace-Lorraine and a "war of revenge" against Germany. Thus the embroilment of Great Britain and France was calculated to leave Germany undisputed master of central and western Europe, with the resulting increase of wealth and prosperity and comfort and luxury and colonies, the general satisfaction of the ambition of the peoples of Germany, and the consequent internal peace for another fifty years. Internal peace, the result of prosperity, is one great advantage that successful war brings in its train, as is self-evident from the study of history.

Thus it was essential for the Japanese to gain possession of Port Arthur at as early a date as possible, and at all costs.

The decisive point, then, would appear to have been Port Arthur and not the Russian field army. Hence, it seems probable that the Japanese detailed such a force as they considered necessary for the close siege of Port Arthur, retained in Japan the 7th and 8th Divisions<sup>1</sup> in case reinforcements might be required, and despatched the balance to engage the Russian field army.

But then, it will be said, surely they should have stood on the defensive at Liao-yang?

It was known to the Japanese that the Russians were receiving constant reinforcements, and that these were arriving far more rapidly than had originally been thought possible. It was also known that the Russians were fortifying their positions in front of Liao-yang, and that they were expecting the arrival of heavy guns. Liao-yang, situated on a great river, and at the junction of the roads from Dalny and Korea, was an important point to the Japanese, and it was essential to deny the Russians time in which to further strengthen their hold on that town.

<sup>1</sup> It is said, however, that these divisions were retained in Japan to guard the country against possible enterprises by the Russian cruisers in Vladivostok. This seems unlikely in view of the reserves possessed by the Japanese. A nation in arms, even when the whole of its active army is engaged over-sea, is not afraid of "raids" executed by landing parties or even by detachments of hostile troops. Such detachments would quickly be overwhelmed and destroyed. The sole fear is lest defenceless coast towns should be bombarded by hostile ships of war.

If, after their repulse at Port Arthur, they had stood on the defensive at Liao-yang, they would not only have admitted defeat, with a corresponding loss of morale, but would have exposed their plans to the Russians; for the latter would then have known for certain that the Japanese efforts were mainly directed against Port Arthur. The Russian army (its morale and general efficiency, as well as its numerical strength, increasing by leaps and bounds) would, sooner or later, have assumed the offensive, and the Japanese would have been obliged to fight in any case. Was it not preferable to take the tide at the flood, to take advantage of their own high morale and of the low Russian morale, and to strike again before the Russians could receive further reinforcements? In view, moreover, of the separation of the 1st Army from the 4th and 2nd, offensive operations alone held out a prospect of victory. A passive attitude which results inevitably in defeat was not to be thought of, and an offensive must in any case be undertaken if the Russians advanced. Why not strike first? The Japanese armies had now completed their preparations, had received the necessary reinforcements to replace casualties, and had collected the necessary reserves of supplies and transport. Why wait?<sup>1</sup> Why hand over the initiative to the Russians?

<sup>1</sup> According to the German official account it was only the rain, and the consequent difficulty of bringing up men and supplies which obliged the Japanese to defer their advance until the end of August. It is also said that the Japanese hoped to capture Port Arthur by assault, and to bring up their besieging army in time for a decisive battle at Liao-yang.

There was also another reason. It was only if the Japanese were prepared to assume the offensive that they could utilise Port Arthur as a lever. If they elected to stand on the defensive their power to manipulate the Russian strategy would be thrown away. It seems probable that they knew perfectly well of the differences of opinion which existed between the Russian Viceroy and the Commander-in-chief. It was only by offensive operations that they could take advantage of this friction. For an offensive attitude would serve to increase it—would enable the Russian Army Commander to say “I told you so,” a remark which would be peculiarly irritating to a man of Admiral Alexiev’s “inflexibility.” After all viceroys and generals are mere men; they are not archangels; and we must bear this fact in mind in our study of war. A defensive attitude, on the other hand, would tend to allay friction, would enable General Kuropatkin to carry out whole-heartedly the desires of the Viceroy and the home government, and would serve to soothe popular excitement in Russia—all things to be avoided, from the Japanese point of view. A Japanese victory at this juncture was calculated to have far-reaching results; and a victory was probable in spite of the Russian numerical superiority; for General Kuropatkin was about to fight at Liaoyang against his better judgment—a fact which the Japanese probably knew well—and a man who fights against his better judgment is already half beaten.

It would seem that, if the Japanese could have

their way, they would prefer the Russians to execute another offensive movement with a part of their forces down the railway line. The Japanese would then get a chance of beating the Russians piecemeal ; and, perhaps, of intercepting their communications. Failing this, it would be most acceptable to the Japanese that the Russians should stand on the defensive and fight to a finish in their positions at Anshanchan and An-ping. The Russians must not be permitted, if it could be avoided, to withdraw, without another defeat, into their zone of manœuvre. But, above all, the Russians must not be permitted to complete their new fortifications, receive large reinforcements, perfect their arrangements, and, then, assume a general offensive with largely superior numbers.

In any case we see that the Japanese ran counter to the most approved method of putting into practice the principle of success. They certainly applied superior force at the decisive point, but they applied it elsewhere simultaneously. There is, in reality, no "principle of war" to be observed in all circumstances. There are many rough rules which are useful in most cases, but any one of which will assuredly result in defeat if slavishly followed in all eventualities. The one principle, the one great fundamental law, is similar to that of dynamics—the greater force, if wisely applied, will overcome the lesser ; but if unwisely applied, the greater force will, from that very fact alone, lose a portion of its power and may find itself the weaker force.

After all, there is no more effective method of applying force than by surprising the enemy. Surprise will compensate for numerical inferiority and, perhaps, for inefficiency. For it strikes directly at the hostile commander's nerves; and these constitute the true vital point of an armed force. If the Japanese could but induce the Russians to believe that their field armies intended to stand on the defensive, and, then, surprise the Russian commander by a sudden offensive, they might well hope for victory in spite of their numerical inferiority and the Russian entrenchments.

The great thing in war is to ensure by careful preparation before hostilities commence the possession of the greater force, and, by a wise system of education and training, the more effective application of it. The Japanese possessed the greater force at Liao-yang as well as at Port Arthur, not on the score of numbers, but on the score of superior efficiency, and by this time they knew it. And their knowledge of the scientific methods by which force should be applied was undoubtedly superior to that possessed by the Russians; and this they also knew. They accepted considerable risks with a great object in view, but the advantages to be gained by success were worth the risks incurred.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BATTLE OF LIAO-YANG.

#### THE FIRST PHASE.

ON the 22nd August, Marshal Oyama had moved his headquarters from Kaiping to Hai-Cheng, and on the 23rd he issued his orders for the Japanese advance. His first object was to drive the Russians out of their positions at Anshanchan and An-ping back into the main line of their defences by the 28th. He therefore directed the 1st Army to gain possession of the high ground on the left bank of the Tang Ho on the 26th; the 4th Army, moving north, was to gain a line about two to three miles from the main defensive lines of the Russians, and attack on the 29th; while the 2nd Army was to assemble on the Sha Ho,<sup>1</sup> a river which crosses the railway about four miles south of the Russian main defences, and also attack on the 29th. These instructions involved the expulsion of the Russians from their positions at Anshanchan and An-ping.

The 1st Army received orders from General Kuroki

<sup>1</sup>This river must not be mistaken for the Sha Ho between Liao-yang and Mukden, on which a great battle was fought in October, 1904.



to advance on the 26th; but the Guard Division moved as early as the 24th, on the initiative of its commander, in order to gain a position from which it could execute the Army Commander's instructions. The initiative displayed by the subordinate leaders in the Japanese army is in startling contrast to the lack of initiative in the Russian army; and, as everybody knows, this same contrast is noticeable between the German and French armies in 1870.

There existed a gap of fourteen miles between the Eastern and Western Groups of the Russian army. General Kuropatkin had already displayed some solicitude for this gap. It had originally been guarded by Mishchenko's cavalry; but that cavalry had been withdrawn, as it sadly needed rest. It was also to form part of a corps of cavalry, and had been replaced by detachments of all arms. The position of the Japanese Guard Division threatened the right flank of the Eastern Group; while reports were received which indicated that a portion of the 4th Japanese Army, the 10th Division, had moved to the north-east as if with a view to penetrating this gap and turning the inner flanks of the two Russian groups. General Kuropatkin anticipated that the right flank of the 3rd Siberians would be attacked by three Japanese divisions. The Eastern Group accordingly brought up some reserves with which to prolong its line, while General Kuropatkin ordered up troops of the 17th Corps. Thus on the very first day we see a process of exhaustion of the Russian reserves commencing, and we begin to see that these

extended positions occupied by a portion of the Russian army were very unsuitable in which to fight to a finish, unless a general offensive were contemplated. A wide gap between the two wings of an army, into which the enemy can penetrate without difficulty, must of necessity be a point of weakness if a defensive attitude is adopted, for the army then has four flanks in place of two; and if there exists a reserve it is likely to be pushed forward, not in an offensive movement, but merely to fill the gap if the inner flanks are threatened, or to prolong the line if the outer flanks are threatened. On the 24th it became apparent to the Russians that a Japanese attack was imminent.

During the 25th General Liubavin executed a reconnaissance towards the line of communication of the 1st Army, and ascertained, and reported, that there was no likelihood of the immediate passage of the Tai-tzu River by the Japanese. This information, together with the operations of the Guard Division and of the 4th Army, attracted General Kuropatkin's attention to the gap in his line of battle.

On the 24th and 25th the Japanese Guard Division drove in the outposts of the 3rd Siberians, but the remainder of the 1st Army did not move. The 10th Russian Corps was ordered to assume the offensive on the 26th, in order to relieve the pressure on the 3rd Siberians; but this order was rescinded during the night of the 25th, as it became apparent that the 10th Corps itself was about to be attacked.

THE COMBATS OF LANG-TZU-SHAN AND AN-PING,  
26th AUGUST.

On the 26th a general offensive of the 1st Army commenced before daybreak. The Guard Division attacked the 3rd Siberians and endeavoured to turn the right flank of the Eastern force, that is, at the gap. The 2nd Division with one brigade of the 12th was launched at the centre of the Eastern force. The remaining brigade of the 12th Division was directed to attack the left of the Eastern force. A detachment, composed of five battalions of the Guard Reserve Brigade, a battery, and a squadron, covered the right flank of the 1st Army, and watched the Russians at Pen-hsi-hu. One Reserve regiment, the 29th, was held as an army reserve.

The attack of the Guard Division failed. It was opposed by the 3rd Siberian Corps. A regiment of Russian infantry, with a squadron of cavalry and a battery of the 17th Corps, which had been brought up to fill the gap, arrived in the nick of time, and delivered a counter-attack with great effect on the left flank of the Guards. The Guard Division was by 8 a.m. in so critical a situation that the army reserve was ordered to its assistance. But this reserve, having been brought up in haste from Feng-huang-Cheng, had already marched far and fast, and was only able to arrive, somewhat exhausted, at 6 p.m. The Russian counter-attack, however, was not pressed owing to a storm of rain, and the Japanese Guard managed to maintain its position. It is noteworthy

that though there were several squadrons of Russian cavalry under General Grekov posted on the right of the 3rd Siberians, and though General Grekov himself explained the situation to the commander of the Russian infantry regiment, and though this infantry regiment marched close past the cavalry to attack the Japanese, yet that the cavalry remained inactive and took no part in the counter-attack. It is the more remarkable in that the Russian infantry and artillery worked in admirable co-operation.

The 2nd Division had not met with much greater success. It had advanced in two columns, and executed a night assault on the right of the 10th Corps; but by 8 a.m. its attack had been brought to a standstill, and its commander, expecting a counter-stroke, had applied for reinforcements. There were, however, none to give him. Fortunately for the Japanese, the Russian reserves of the 3rd Siberian and 10th Corps had also been exhausted. The 12th Division advanced in five columns and assaulted the centre and left of the 10th Corps before daylight. The 10th Corps was holding seventeen miles of mountainous country with fourteen battalions in first line, four battalions in second line, and two battalions in reserve. Two of the Japanese columns succeeded in penetrating the Russian line, and these successes led to the retreat of the whole 10th Corps to a second position which had been fortified, and which was about two miles in rear of the first. The 10th Corps had occupied the front position, which overlooked the valley of the Lan Ho, as it facilitated

an offensive movement; it was, however, unsuitable for defence, inasmuch as there was much dead ground in front of it, while artillery could not act effectively. The retirement of the Russians had, however, left their extreme left isolated. Five and a half Russian battalions with eight guns were posted on a commanding and steep ridge about two miles long,<sup>1</sup> of which the northern end was covered by the Tai-tzu River, which flowed in a semicircle round it at a distance of two to three miles. So strongly was this flank posted that General Kuroki had discarded all idea of turning it. One brigade, however, advanced to attack it. Of this brigade one regiment made a frontal attack, while the other endeavoured to turn the Russian left. The frontal attack made no progress; but the flank attack was pressed with the utmost determination. The Japanese got to within a few yards of the Russians, and severe hand-to-hand fighting ensued. A small party of Japanese also brought an enfilade fire to bear with tremendous effect. General Sluchevski, realising the danger to his left flank, asked for reinforcements. These were, however, refused by General Bilderling. Four times reinforcements were applied for, but none were available; though there was still in reserve the 3rd Division of the 17th Corps, which was posted at the bridge over the Tai-tzu, but on the right bank of that river. General Bilderling considered that the reports of General Sluchevski were exaggerated, and he also

<sup>1</sup> About 1600 feet above An-ping and 800 feet above the valley to the eastward.

considered that the reserve of the Eastern force was insufficient. Far from reinforcing the 10th Corps, therefore, he ordered the commander of the 3rd Siberian Corps to return as soon as possible the troops of the 17th Corps which had been lent to him.

General Bilderling, however, was merely executing the instructions of General Kuropatkin. The latter was connected with the Corps commanders by telephone; but it is doubtful whether he was similarly connected with General Bilderling, for he appears to have communicated with the latter in writing. In any case, he was kept fully informed of the progress of the struggle. During the course of the day he warned his subordinates that the most dangerous points of the line appeared to be the interval between the Eastern and Southern Groups, the interval between the 3rd Siberians and the 10th Corps, and the extreme left flank where it rested on the Tai-tzu Ho. It is interesting as showing the mental attitude of a man who fights a defensive battle, and whose chief desire is—as it always is, apparently—to fill up gaps. Again he writes to his subordinates, “One cannot discern the point at which Kuroki intends to make his principal effort.” He evidently believed that General Kuroki held in hand a large reserve with which to deal a smashing blow at some point; and he thought that, perhaps, it might be directed against the right of the 3rd Siberians, Nodzu’s army moving to its right to assist. “It is necessary,” he continues, “to dispense reserves with economy

only, until we are able to discern the direction of the principal effort of the enemy." He also drew attention to the fact that the right bank of the Tai-tzu had been denuded of troops, and that, if General Kuroki crossed the river with a part of his forces it would become necessary to throw a regiment of infantry, at least, across it to oppose him on that bank. It was for these reasons, doubtless, that he refused to permit the 17th Corps to assist the 10th. It is evident that General Kuropatkin was now seeking to fight the stereotyped form of "defensive-offensive" battle; that is, that he desired to employ a portion of his force to repulse the hostile attacks, to wear down his enemies and oblige them to exhaust their reserves; then, finally, to strike a heavy and decisive blow with his own reserves. It was a similar conception to that which had actuated General Stakelberg at Telissu.

At about 5 p.m. a heavy and continuous storm of rain fell over the battlefield. It had two results. Five Russian companies on the extreme Russian left, which had fought throughout the day, had suffered cruelly, had lost most of their officers, and had become disorganised, gave way; and the Japanese gained a firm footing on the northern end of the ridge. The Russians still, however, held on to the southern end until 6 p.m. They then also gave way.

The other result of the storm was that the Tang Ho filled up, and it was feared that the fords would become impassable, and that the bridges might be swept away. In that event the 10th Corps, if driven

back, would be lost. In any case its position was precarious, for the Japanese had, by their success on the Russian left, seized a point which threatened the only bridge over the river (about three miles north of An-ping) by which the 10th Corps could retreat. When General Kuropatkin heard of the collapse of his extreme left, he gave orders that the position was to be recovered at all costs, and a brigade of the 17th Corps was brought up and placed at General Sluchevski's disposal. But the commander of the 3rd Siberians had drawn attention to the fact that the retirement of the 10th Corps had rendered his position untenable, and that if a retreat was to take place it must be executed by night, or he would suffer serious losses.

During the night General Kuropatkin, on the suggestions of Generals Bilderling and Ivanov, changed his mind, and ordered the Eastern Group to retreat to the left bank of the Tang River. Thus we see that the attempt to wear down and exhaust the Japanese forces with a portion of the Russian army had failed.

General Kuropatkin now apparently reverted to his original plan—to draw the Japanese astride the Tai-tzu River, and then, utilising the bridge-head, to overwhelm one portion. He therefore ordered the whole army to fall back into the main lines of defence, that is, to the line Ma-yeh-tun—Wu-chiakou—Hsia-pu.

The retreat of both groups was effected admirably; but that of the Eastern Group was both dangerous and difficult, entailing great hardship on the troops. A



defile had to be traversed, and for ten miles the road followed by the 10th Corps ran parallel to the enemy's front. The roads were, moreover, in a terrible condition owing to the continuous and heavy rain. Fortunately for the Russians, heavy rain and a dense fog checked the Japanese reconnaissance, and it was not until 8.30 a.m. on the 27th that the retreat was discovered.

At the time that he ordered this retreat, General Kuropatkin strengthened his detachments watching the river line and his flanks, and took measures, as we have already seen, to guard Mukden from the westward. He was particularly anxious to concentrate the 17th Corps on the right bank of the Tai-tzu as soon as possible. He was also anxious to obtain the earliest possible information of the passage of the Tai-tzu Ho by the Japanese.

By the evening of the 27th the Japanese had occupied the high ground evacuated by the Russians, and were overlooking the Tang Ho, the Guard Division being at the head waters of that river.

The 2nd and 4th Armies, similarly, occupied by the evening of the 27th the positions evacuated by the Russians.

According to the Russian General Staff Conferences,<sup>1</sup> the result gained by the battle from the Russian point of view was that they had discovered that the Eastern and Southern Groups had each been attacked by two Japanese divisions, and that the remainder of the Japanese forces were in reserve in readiness to

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iii. p. 63.

"strike the decisive blow." This information was quite incorrect; the whole of the Japanese forces had been employed, and they had no great mass in reserve. According also to the conferences, the 3rd Siberian and the 10th Corps had put forth great efforts, had held their positions with great gallantry, but had, nevertheless, been forced to retreat. The result was a considerable loss of morale, in addition to the physical exhaustion of these troops. They were "shaken." This physical exhaustion and loss of morale were to bear bitter fruit. The only Russian troops now which had not suffered defeat at the hands of the Japanese were the 5th Siberians, and these had not yet been engaged.

On the 28th the Russian retreat continued. That of the Eastern Group to the "advanced positions" of Hiao-yang (C-C) was conducted without much difficulty except such as arose from the condition of the roads and the exhaustion of the troops. The Western Group, however, was not quite so fortunate. General Stakelberg, with the 1st Siberian Corps, which was on the right, had requested leave to halt and rest his troops on the 28th. To this General Zarubaiev, who commanded the Western Group, agreed, issuing orders to warn the rearguards of the other corps to stand fast. But General Sasulitch, commanding the 2nd Siberian Corps, which was on the left of the group, hearing that a Japanese division was concentrating in front of him, having only one division of his corps at the front, and acting apparently under a misapprehension, gave orders to continue the retreat. His division,

with its rearguard, consequently retreated, exposing the left flank of the 4th Siberians, which were in the centre of the group. At 6 a.m. on the 28th his cavalry again informed him that Japanese forces were threatening his front and left flank. He again retreated.

Early on the 28th the 4th Siberians were attacked in front and left flank by the Japanese advanced guards. They could not retreat, for the roads were blocked with transport, and it was not till 6 a.m. that its commander became aware of the retreat of the 2nd Siberians. The 4th Siberians were consequently in considerable danger, and became heavily engaged against the 3rd and 5th Japanese Divisions. General Zarubaiev, hastily taking measures to support the 4th Siberians and cover its retreat, sent a direct order to General Sasulitch to halt. The latter, however, again continued his retreat into the "advanced positions" (C-C). On hearing of this retreat General Zarubaiev again ordered General Sasulitch to halt at all costs. General Kuropatkin, also hearing of this retreat, sent a message to General Sasulitch, ordering him to halt, to retreat very slowly if forced to do so, in no circumstances to retreat beyond a certain line, to maintain touch with the corps to his right and left, and, if it were necessary to do so to cover the retreat of those corps, to fight to the last man and perish.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Conferences*, vol. iii. p. 88. See also *Russian Official History*. General Kuropatkin's message was, indeed, a severe reproof to General Sasulitch for his hasty retreat.

In the meantime the 1st Siberian Corps was attacked by the 6th Japanese Division. Fortunately for the Russians the Japanese also were exhausted; and the troops were finally extricated, and retreated into the main defences on the line C-C. As showing the difficulties of movement in the then condition of the roads we may quote our official history: "The difficulties of moving the transport along the muddy roads proved to be immensely greater than had been anticipated, and when in the neighbourhood of Hsun-chia-Shan-tai-tzu, Colonel Bachinski's battery was literally buried. An American officer who witnessed the scene reported that twenty-four horses were harnessed to a single gun, but were quite unable to move it, and that the officers had no choice but to abandon the battery to the enemy."<sup>1</sup>

The hardships of this retreat must be borne in mind, for they appear to have had a considerable bearing on the ultimate issue of the battle. General Zarubaiev reported that the execution of this retreat demanded "heroic efforts" on the part of the 1st Siberians under General Stakelberg. Thus the Russian troops were not only exhausted by the physical exertions required of them, but were demoralised by retreat under compulsion of the enemy. The Japanese troops, on the other hand, though equally exhausted, were elated by victory.

General Kuroki had intended to press his attack against the Eastern Russian Group on the 28th, and by mid-day of the 27th his troops were in readiness

<sup>1</sup> See also *Conferences, Liao-yang*.

to force their way across the Tang Ho. But fresh instructions from Imperial Headquarters necessitated an alteration in his dispositions. Imperial Headquarters, uncertain whether the Russians intended to fight to a finish in their entrenched positions at Liao-yang, or to retreat across the Tai-tzu, issued general instructions to meet either contingency. In the former contingency the three armies were to combine in a general attack; in the latter the 1st Army was to be in readiness to cross the Tai-tzu, and threaten the Russian line of retreat. General Kuroki was informed that the 2nd and 4th Armies would that night, if all went well, reach positions from which they could attack the western and southern fronts of the Russian positions, the 2nd Army being astride the railway at Sha Ho, the 4th Army on the line Ying-tao-yuan—Tsao-fan-tun.

General Kuroki thereupon ordered the Guard Division to move almost north instead of north-west, and to attack in co-operation with the 4th Army; the 2nd Division, keeping touch with the right of the Guard, and assisting it if necessary, was to move to the junction of the Tang and Tai-tzu Rivers; while the 12th Division was to move to the Tai-tzu, with its left on the Tang and its right at Ying-Shou-pu, and make preparations for crossing the river. These movements commenced on the 28th. The Guard Division advanced against the Russian rearguards, constantly endeavouring to turn the right flank of the Eastern Group with one of its brigades. The 10th Division and 10th Reserve

Brigade of the 4th Army, moving in a north-easterly direction, came into touch with the Guard Division of the 1st Army, while the 5th Division,<sup>1</sup> bearing more to its left, kept touch with the right of the 2nd Army, and bore against the left flank of the Western Russian Group. Thus the 4th Army was practically broken up for the time being. It is interesting to note that information of the movement of troops of the 4th Army (which were, however, reported to consist of two divisions) to join the 1st Army had reached the Russians as early as the 18th to 22nd August, that is, six to ten days before it actually occurred.

The 2nd Army advanced astride of the railway with the 3rd Division on its right, the 6th in the centre, and the 4th on its left, while the 1st Cavalry Brigade covered the left flank. The 11th Reserve Brigade and the 1st Artillery Brigade marched in second line.

It will be noticed that the inner flanks of the two Russian groups had felt the chief pressure of the Japanese advance; and General Kuropatkin, being solicitous for these points of danger, pushed up some of his reserves in order to fill the gap. On this day also, the 28th, he heard that two Japanese battalions had crossed the Tai-tzu Ho, apparently by means of boats. The information was premature; but it had been expected by the Russians, and one infantry regiment had already been moved

<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered that the 5th Division had joined the 4th Army for the Battle of Hsi-mu-Cheng, and had become a part of it.

across the river to entrench and hold the high ground at Manju-Yama. This regiment, which belonged to the 17th Corps, was followed on the 28th by the remainder of the Corps, numbering thirty-two battalions, twenty-one squadrons, and 118 guns, which occupied a position overlooking the river from Height 1057 to Manju-Yama. This position had already been selected, and was now prepared for defence. The remainder of the Russian army was disposed for the defence of the entrenched line, Ma-yeh-tun—Hsia-pu, as follows :

The 1st Siberians on the right, from Ma-yeh-tun to Hsin-li-tun, having eight and a half battalions with forty-eight guns in first line, and sixteen battalions with fourteen guns in reserve.

The 3rd Siberians in the centre, from Wu-chia-Kou to Shih-chang-gu, having fifteen battalions and forty-eight guns in first line, and thirteen battalions with four guns in reserve.

The 10th Corps from the left of the 3rd Siberians to Hsia-pu, having seventeen battalions with eighty-eight guns in first line and fifteen battalions with twenty-four guns in reserve.

The General Reserve under the immediate orders of General Kuropatkin consisted of :

The 2nd Siberians, thirteen battalions, thirty-two guns, and two squadrons, posted immediately south of Liao-yang.

The 4th Siberians, twenty-five battalions, thirty-two guns, and six squadrons, posted north of Liao-yang and on the left bank of the Tai-tzu.

One division of the 5th Siberians, under General Ekk, of seven and a half battalions, twenty-four guns, and two squadrons,<sup>1</sup> was posted on the right bank of the Tai-tzu in the vicinity of the railway bridge.

One brigade of the 5th Siberians, eight battalions, sixteen guns, and two squadrons, under General Orlov, was posted at Sha-ho, twenty-five miles north of Liao-yang.

Mishchenko's cavalry, eleven squadrons and six guns, were posted west of Liao-yang.

Total General Reserve—fifty-three and a half battalions, 110 guns, and twenty-eight squadrons.

The garrison of Liao-yang consisted of nine battalions, two squadrons, and thirty-two guns of various types.<sup>2</sup>

Detachments were posted to cover the flanks as follows :

The right flank—Samsonov's cavalry, forty-eight squadrons and eighteen guns about Wu-lun-tai.

The left flank—the 17th Corps, with twelve battalions, forty-four guns, and two squadrons entrenching from Height 1057 to Hsi-kuan-tun ; and a reserve of twelve battalions, 104 guns, and five squadrons about Erh-tao-kou. A detachment of the 17th Corps of two battalions, fourteen guns, and eleven squadrons, under General Orbeliani, was

<sup>1</sup> Raised on the 29th to eleven and a half battalions, twenty-four guns, and six squadrons.

<sup>2</sup> Some of these troops were taken on the 26th August to reinforce the flank detachments. Eight battalions and twenty-six guns of the 1st European Corps arrived from Harbin during the battle.



detailed to cover the left of the 17th Corps and to watch the valley of the Tai-tzu above Hsi-kuan-tun.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to these, detachments were thrown out to guard against wide turning movements :

The right flank—Grekov's detachment, one and a half battalions, twelve guns, and fourteen squadrons at Hsiao-pei-ho.

Kossagovski's detachment, six and a half battalions, sixteen guns, and nine squadrons at Ta-wan on the Liao River.

The left flank—Liubavin, four battalions, four guns, and seventeen squadrons, watching the Tai-tzu from Kan-sha to San-chia-tzu.

Peterev, four battalions and eight guns, was moving to Fu-shun from Mukden, en route for the Ta-ling Pass and Hsing-Cheng.

Madritov, two battalions, two guns, and nine squadrons, was exploring to the south-east from Huai-jen-Hsien.

Broadly speaking, the Russian army was distributed as follows :

Entrenched in line of battle—about ninety battalions, 266 guns, and nineteen squadrons. In General Reserve—fifty-three and a half battalions, 110 guns, and twenty-three squadrons. To cover the flanks (including the 17th Corps)—fifty-nine battalions, 107 squadrons, and 242 guns.

Thus less than one-half the army was to withstand

<sup>1</sup> The whereabouts of the remaining six battalions of the 17th Corps is uncertain. One or two were apparently pushed forward to Kung-Fu-fen, while the remainder occupied the entrenchments south-east of Hsing-Cheng.

the attack of the Japanese; about one-quarter of the army was to assume the offensive when the time arrived; and one-quarter of the army was merely to observe and guard against turning movements.

That was the result of a defensive attitude—waiting in expectation of a blow. It was to be expected that the half of the Russian army which was to bear the brunt of the Japanese attack would quickly be reduced to extremity, and would ultimately give way unless reinforced from the General Reserve. The General Reserve, while unemployed, would be a dead loss to the army, as would also be the detachments thrown out to cover the flanks.

General Kuropatkin, together with the Viceroy, attached the greatest importance to the danger of a great turning movement round the Russian left flank. This fear had been with them since the end of July. It was accentuated by the difficulty of ascertaining the positions and strength of the Japanese armies. The whole of the flat country along the railway and to the west of it was, at this time, a “sea of kao-liang,” which grew to a height of twelve feet, that is, higher than the head of a horseman. The movement of formed bodies of troops was confined to the tracks and roads through these crops. The action of cavalry was rendered excessively difficult, and mounted action was practically impossible. Attempts had been made to clear a field of fire in front of the Russian entrenchments. It had been accomplished in certain localities, notably in front of Hill 693 and Ma-yeh-tun, but to a distance only of some 1500

yards. In this quarter the *Kao-liang* had been broken down at a height of three feet above the ground and entangled, thus forming a difficult obstacle to the advance of hostile troops while affording no cover against view and fire.

In other quarters of the battlefield the *Kao-liang* extended to within 400 to 600 yards of the Russian positions. It served as an admirable screen to the Japanese, and rendered it difficult, or indeed impossible, for the Russians to form an accurate estimate of the numbers by which they were attacked. It was a great advantage to the assailant and to the better trained troops. In front of the 3rd Siberians and the 10th Corps the *Kao-liang* was less ubiquitous, being cultivated in the valleys only. On the other hand, the country was extremely broken and cut up by deep ravines, which permitted the Japanese to creep up unobserved in many places to within a few hundred yards of the Russian positions. On the whole, it may be said that the state of nerves which invariably seizes on the man who stands on the defensive, the fear lest a sudden, unexpected, and overwhelming attack should develop here or there, was accentuated by the nature of the country; and we find General Kuropatkin urgently asking for information (to be obtained by patrols) as to what forces were coming against his front, what forces against his flanks, and what forces were moving up the Liao River.

Not only had the *Kao-liang* not been cut to a sufficient extent in front of the Russian positions, but ,

the entrenchment of those positions had not been completed. The positions at Ma-yeh-tun had been "feverishly entrenched" since the 15th August, but those from Wu-chia-kou to Hsia-pu had only been commenced on the 23rd; and everywhere the troops were hard at work as late as the night of the 29th-30th August. Even so they were not completed when the Japanese attack commenced. That which added enormously to the difficulty of the Russians was the absence of maps. There appears to have been but one map showing the Russian positions and the roads therefrom to the Tai-tzu. Yet the Russians anticipated a sudden retreat into the main defences of Liao-yang, a rapid concentration on the right bank of the river, and a counter-stroke against such of the Japanese forces as might cross the river. It was only on the 30th August that maps of the Russian positions were issued to the troops. It seems probable, however, that the lack of maps was due to the desire to maintain secrecy as to the system of entrenchments.

On the 29th August the Russian estimate of the Japanese strength was as follows :

1st Army, in two groups— $5\frac{1}{4}$  to  $5\frac{3}{4}$  divisions, or 72 to 76 battalions (60,000 bayonets, 1500 sabres, and 180 guns). These were opposed by the 3rd Siberians and 10th Corps, numbering 56 battalions, 12 squadrons, and 204 guns.

4th Army— $3\frac{1}{2}$  divisions, or 42 battalions (35,000 bayonets, 1000 sabres, and 100 guns).

2nd Army— $5\frac{1}{4}$  divisions, or 66 battalions (58,000

bayonets, 2000 sabres, and 288 guns). This army was opposed by the 1st Siberians, consisting of 24 battalions, 10 squadrons, and 62 guns. It was also believed that the 2nd Japanese Army was about to be reinforced, and that large forces, with siege guns, were landing at Ying-Kou.

There was a gap in the Russian line of battle at the Tassu Brook of some two to three miles. It had been intended to defend this valley by the cross-fire of rifle and artillery alone; but the plan of entrenchments had been drawn up when the country was free of *Kao-liang*. Since that time the crops had grown up, and it was now found that they afforded admirable cover for the approach of the Japanese. There was now no time to cut the *Kao-liang*. During the retreat the Japanese had pressed most energetically against the inner flanks of the two Russian groups, and it was feared that they would continue to press their attacks against this weak point in the Russian line of battle, which could now be defended by artillery fire alone. On the 28th, therefore, a detachment was hastily organised, consisting of one infantry regiment of the 2nd Siberians, two battalions of the 3rd Siberians, a cavalry regiment, and four batteries to defend this gap. On the 29th General Gourko's cavalry of the 1st Siberians, which was covering the right flank of that corps, and which consisted of about four squadrons, was ordered across to assist in the defence of the gap. Thus we see a depletion of the general reserve in progress even before the battle commenced.

It will be remembered that on the 28th a report had been received from the Russian cavalry watching the line of the Tai-tzu about Hsi-kuan-tun that two Japanese battalions had crossed the river at Kan-sha. The report was untrue, and the Russian cavalry had apparently mistaken General Liubavin's troops for Japanese. But the passage of the river at this point was expected by the Russians; and though the report was denied by General Liubavin, the Headquarter Staff apparently believed it. General Kuropatkin now commenced to elaborate the plan of action which he had already formed in case the Japanese should cross the Tait-tzu in force and threaten his retreat on Mukden. It was apparently considered advisable to hold a powerful force of cavalry in readiness to move to the threatened point. As General Mishchenko's cavalry was exhausted by the previous operations General Samsonov, with nineteen squadrons and six guns, was ordered into reserve west of Liao-yang, while Mishchenko's cavalry of eleven squadrons<sup>1</sup> and six guns was ordered to replace General Samsonov at Wu-lun-tai to cover the right flank of the army. As a result of this exchange of duties, General Mishchenko arrived at Wu-lun-tai on the 30th, only in time to find that place and the neighbouring villages occupied by the Japanese. At the same time General Ekk's detachment was reinforced by four battalions and four squadrons.

General Kuropatkin also feared lest his detachment at Pen-hsi-hu might be overwhelmed, and he ordered

<sup>1</sup> Reinforced on the 30th to twenty-four squadrons.

the infantry, under Colonel Romichevski, consisting of four battalions, to retreat to a point whence it could guard the roads to Yen-tai and Mukden. Colonel Romichevski accordingly withdrew on the 29th to the neighbourhood of the Toumenling Pass, the cavalry of General Liubavin's detachment being left to watch the river line.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime the Japanese armies had received instructions that the Russian positions were to be attacked, and that the necessary preparations were to be executed as rapidly as possible.<sup>2</sup> The 29th was accordingly devoted by the Japanese to reconnaissance of the Russian positions, and to preparations for the passage of the river by a portion of the 1st Army.

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Grulev's troops, which had been at Pen-hsi-hu for the past month and knew the country well, were actually relieved on the 28th by a regiment of the 5th Siberians, under Colonel Romichevski, which was new to the country. It was this latter regiment which retreated on the 29th in accordance with General Kuropatkin's orders. The exact strength of this detachment is doubtful, but on the 30th and 31st it consisted of four battalions, seventeen squadrons, and four guns, the whole under General Liubavin.

<sup>2</sup> General Kuropatkin, in his tactical instructions issued on the 30th August (*Russian Official History*, vol. iii. App. 173), summarises the tactical methods of the Japanese. He states that, in addition to their service of espionage, consisting not only of Chinese but of disguised Japanese officers and men, numerous Japanese infantry and cavalry patrols studied the Russian positions and the approaches to them, penetrating through the Russian lines and thoroughly examining the Russian dispositions. In this reconnaissance the Japanese devoted special attention to the Russian flanks, as it was to the flanks that the Japanese "attach a decisive importance." The Japanese also placed their guns in position, preferably during the night, and entrenched their positions to check a Russian offensive. General Kuropatkin also urged his subordinate commanders to devote more time to, and to be more methodical in, their preparation for attack

The Japanese 1st Cavalry Brigade pressed round the Russian right, meeting with but little or no opposition in consequence of the exchange of duties between Generals Samsonov and Mishchenko. Their progress was, however, reported, and they appear to have been mistaken for infantry. But it seems that the Japanese were in the habit of supporting their cavalry with small detachments of infantry, which served not only to strengthen the cavalry but to mislead the Russians. As a result of the operations on this date the Russians concluded that the objects of the Japanese were :

1. To attack the front of the 1st Siberians while enveloping the right flank of the Russian army and intervening between it and the Liao-yang forts.

2. To pierce through the gap between the 1st and 3rd Siberians.

3. To cross the Tai-tzu between Manju-Yama and Kan-sha, and to operate in a "decisive manner" against the Russian left flank.<sup>1</sup>

We shall see that the Russians had fathomed the Japanese intentions, even to the very point at which they intended to cross the river. They had, however, greatly exaggerated the Japanese numbers; they failed to recognise that the Japanese would place almost every man in line of battle, but believed that they would hold back a powerful reserve with which to deliver the "decisive blow." Now General Kuropatkin apparently intended to strike back only when the Japanese had fully committed their whole force ;

<sup>1</sup> *Conferences*, vol. ii. p. 99.



and, being under this misapprehension as to the Japanese reserves, he waited from day to day, seeking to divine the "direction of the principal effort" of the Japanese. It would be interesting to know how the Russians had obtained this false idea of Japanese tactics. Possibly the Japanese had, at peace manœuvres, held back large reserves and delivered decisive blows for the especial behoof of the Russian military attachés.

On the evening of the 29th Marshal Oyama issued orders for a general attack on the Russian positions. The 2nd Army was to advance against the southern Russian group, that is against the 1st Siberians, with two of its divisions, keeping back one division at the disposal of Marshal Oyama. It marched accordingly, the 3rd Division east of the railway, the 6th Division west of the railway, and the 4th Division on the left of the 6th. The 4th Division was, however, ordered to "take position" at Wu-lun-tai. The 11th Reserve Brigade and the Reserve Artillery Brigade marched in rear up the railway line as a reserve to the 2nd Army.

The 1st Army was directed to push back the hostile force in its front and to prepare to cross to the right bank of the Tai-tzu River with the greater part of its forces as soon as possible. General Kuroki accordingly ordered the Guard Division to attack with its right on the road from Feng-huang-Cheng to Liao-yang and its left on Meng-chia-fang, keeping touch with the 4th Army. The 2nd Division was to send a part of its strength to support the Guard, and with

the bulk of its force to occupy Shih-cho-tzu on the Tang River. The 12th Division was to occupy a line with its right at Ying-Shou-pu and its left near the confluence of the Tang with the Tai-tzu, and prepare to cross the latter river between Kan-sha and Hsi-kuan-tun.

The actual orders issued by Marshal Oyama to the 4th Army are unknown, but it was apparently directed to support the 1st Army with one division and the 2nd with one division.

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On the 30th, the 10th Division, with the 10th Reserve Brigade, endeavoured to envelop the right flank of the 3rd Siberians, while the Guard attacked that corps in front; the 5th Division attacked the left of the 1st Siberians in conjunction with the 2nd Army. It would appear as though the Japanese knew of the interval between the 1st and 3rd Siberians, and sought to turn the inner flanks of the two Russian groups. The 2nd Division attacked the right of the 10th Corps, but the left of that corps was not molested. It was the right of the 3rd Siberians and the whole of the 1st Siberians which bore the brunt of the Japanese attack. The latter, numbering twenty-four battalions and sixty-two guns, was attacked by forty-two battalions<sup>1</sup> and eighty-two guns. The detachment which had been formed for the defence of the

<sup>1</sup>Excluding the 4th Division, which was not engaged on the 30th, but was held at the disposal of Marshal Oyama.

Tassu Valley covered the left flank of the 1st Siberians and the right of the 3rd, and successfully checked all attempts to penetrate through the gap.

The right of the 1st Siberians, which had been uncovered by the withdrawal of Samsonov's cavalry, was quickly enveloped; in the first instance by the 1st Japanese Cavalry Brigade, and later by the 6th Japanese Division. The Cavalry Brigade, which was practically unopposed, occupied Wu-lun-tai, and brought its guns into action against Ma-yeh-tun and Hill 693, enfilading the Russian trenches. When the 6th Division arrived the Russians were obliged to refuse and extend their flank to meet the enveloping movement, and their line then ran from Hsin-li-tun to Ma-yeh-tun, and thence to the north along the railway. As can easily be imagined, the salient at Ma-yeh-tun and Hill 693 was subjected to a severe cross-fire, and early in the day General Stakelberg asked for reinforcements of one division, or at least of a brigade, stating that such a reinforcement was essential if he was expected to hold his positions. General Kuropatkin, however, refused the request on the grounds that the 3rd Siberians were equally hard pressed and that the reserves were required to support them. He urged the 1st Siberians to assist the 3rd, and added that if the latter were forced to retreat into the main defences of Liao-yang the former should also retreat. Nevertheless two battalions of the 2nd Siberians appear to have been sent to General Stakelberg.

During the morning of the 30th news was received of the repulse of the Japanese at Port Arthur. This

news was communicated to the army, and roused great enthusiasm amongst the troops.

At 12.45 p.m. General Stakelberg again applied for reinforcements of artillery and officers to replace losses. In answer to this request one regiment of the 2nd Siberians and one and a half batteries of the 4th Siberians were sent to him. At the same time he was told that he was not to employ them "without particular necessity or until his own corps reserves had been exhausted." This order was also given to the commander of the reinforcing regiment, who was apparently told that it was his duty to ascertain that the reserves of the 1st Siberians were exhausted before he permitted himself to be employed by General Stakelberg. General Kuropatkin also pointed out to General Stakelberg that the Japanese could not be strong everywhere, that they were apparently advancing in force west of the railway, and that, therefore, it was probable that but one Japanese division was advancing against the front of the 1st Siberians. He urged General Stakelberg to discover the exact strength of the hostile forces opposed to him.

At the same time General Kuropatkin took measures to secure his right flank. He sent the remainder of the 2nd Siberians, four battalions and two batteries, to a point on the railway about three miles north of Hill 693; he also ordered the 4th Siberians to send one regiment of four battalions and two and a half batteries to the same place; and he reinforced General Mishchenko with one infantry

regiment of two battalions and one squadron of the 4th Siberians and several squadrons from General Samsonov, thereby increasing General Mishchenko's detachment to twenty-four squadrons, twelve guns, and two battalions. General Levestam was also sent with a brigade of the 4th Siberians, with orders to occupy the main defences at the point where they crossed the railway with two battalions, and to take the remaining six to support the 1st Siberians. In all, General Kuropatkin employed, according to his own account, fifteen battalions to attack the Japanese turning column in front and flank. But these troops were drawn from different corps, were sent forward in driblets, and were not under one commander. Neither were they ordered to attack. It is hardly astonishing, therefore, to find that the result was totally inadequate to the force employed. The four battalions of the 4th Siberians on arriving near Chou-chia-pu-tzu at 6 p.m. found that place occupied by the Japanese, and, on the urgent request of the commander on the spot, attacked. The attack was successful, the Japanese being driven out of the village at the point of the bayonet, and to a distance of a mile beyond it. The Russians, however, contented themselves with occupying the captured village, and the Japanese again advanced, endeavouring to turn it by the west, and moving hidden through the thick *Kao-liang*. The other Russian reinforcements as they arrived merely prolonged the Russian defensive line to the north, but made no attempt to attack the Japanese.

Further out on the Russian right flank Mishchenko had attempted but little. The Japanese cavalry had methodically occupied village after village, even driving Russian cavalry from one of them. Mishchenko finally sent five squadrons to attack one of these villages just north of Wu-lun-tai. The attack was successful; for, after a few shots, the Japanese cavalry retired. The Russian squadrons then attacked Wu-lun-tai, but were repulsed. The Russian General Staff *Conferences* state that General Mishchenko could not turn the Japanese cavalry out of these villages, as he had no infantry. The two battalions reached him at 6 p.m., too late, according to General Mishchenko's view, to undertake any enterprises against the Japanese, and, "under their protection," according to the Russian official history, "the Russian cavalry installed itself for the night at Tan-chuang-tzu." Certainly, if cavalry is employed in this fashion on the battlefield, obsessed with the idea that it cannot attack and drive hostile troops from a village, and that it cannot remain in close proximity to hostile infantry during the night unless protected by infantry, it is difficult to see of what value it can be. For fighting has always, since the beginning of the world, centred round villages or other tactical points which afford natural cover and can be easily and rapidly entrenched; and troops which cannot attack such points are practically useless. The argument is, of course, that cavalry should move round such points; but, in that case, it will be obliged to move a very long way round, and is

likely to find its retreat intercepted by an enterprising adversary. Cavalry is just as susceptible to a threat to its line of retreat as are other troops—except in peace manœuvres. By moving too far round, moreover, cavalry is apt to uncover the flanks of its infantry, who must, of necessity, trust to it for information of an enveloping movement. This danger becomes accentuated in close country, where villages, woods, hedgerows, and other tactical points abound. Such was the case in this battle. General Mishchenko was separated from the right of the 1st Siberians by a distance of under three miles; yet the Japanese infantry commenced to penetrate through this gap; and the reinforcements sent up by General Kuropatkin to cover his flank found themselves obliged to prolong the defensive line to the north of Chou-chia-pu-tzu.

Fighting ceased temporarily as darkness fell about 7 p.m. The Japanese attacks had been everywhere repulsed. The left of the 10th Division, which had sought to penetrate the gap at the Tassu Brook, was counter-attacked and driven up the valley. Its situation was rendered so serious that Marshal Oyama, having no reserves to send to its assistance, called on the 2nd Army for a supreme effort to oust the Russians in front of it from their positions, and so “to come to the assistance of the division in difficulties.” In consequence of this appeal four battalions of the 4th Division were sent, by permission of Marshal Oyama, to prolong the left of the 6th Division and envelop the right flank of the

1st Siberians. It was a part of these troops which captured Chou-chia-pu-tzu, and were driven therefrom by the counter-attack of a regiment of the 4th Siberians.

General Kuropatkin's reserves, with which he had intended to manœuvre and attack if occasion arose, had been dissipated. In all, twenty-two battalions and fifty-six guns had left the General Reserve; but of these only nine and a half battalions and twenty-four guns had taken part in the actual fighting. There now remained only thirty-one battalions and fifty-four guns, and these were scattered in three places, a portion being twenty-five miles distant. The corps commanders had also exhausted their reserves and had applied for reinforcements. General Stakelberg had, as we have seen, appealed early in the day on the grounds that his force was insufficient with which to fight to a finish in his positions. General Sluchevski, commanding the 10th Corps, had similarly appealed, though only the right of his corps had been attacked. It was this very fact which led him to believe that the "principal shock" would be delivered against the centre and left of his corps, and he therefore urged the Commander-in-chief to bring the General Reserve closer to him. Here, again, we see the mental attitude of men fighting on the defensive. Those who have already been seriously attacked naturally consider that the "principal shock" will be directed against them; but so also do those who have not been attacked at all; and the whole cry out for reinforcements. It is



said that the Commander-in-chief must display inflexibility, and sternly refuse to deplete the general reserve with which he intends to strike his terrific blow at the critical moment. But we are apt to forget that all his beautiful plans will come to nought if his line of battle gives way. There is, however, one prominent fact which stands out. Under one-half of the Russian army had been engaged on this day. A general cannot expect to win battles if he only employs half his army at a time.

During the night of the 30th the Russian commanders made great efforts to withdraw troops from the first line and form new reserves. General Kuropatkin issued an order to that effect. At 7 p.m. he took General Stakelberg to task for employing four battalions of the 4th Siberians in the attack on Chou-chia-pu-tzu before he had exhausted his own corps reserves, and ordered him to return the ten battalions of the 4th Siberians which had been sent to assist him, replacing them with the five battalions of the 2nd Siberians which had also been sent to him. He added "it is possible that they (the 4th Siberians) will cross to-day to the right bank of the Tai-tzu Ho." At 10 p.m., in answer to the above order, General Stakelberg asked leave to keep the troops of the 4th Siberians, being confident that he would be attacked by the Japanese reserves on the following day. At 12.10 a.m. on the 31st, hearing that a direct order had also been sent to the troops of the 4th Siberians to rejoin their corps, he again applied with greater urgency

to be permitted to keep them. This second brought down on him a severe reproof. "There was no question," wrote General Kuropatkin, "of placing under your orders the units which were sent to assist you; and you have received no indication leading you to believe that they were under your orders. Having misinterpreted the notification which was sent to you as to the movement of these units, you have deprived me of an important part of the reserve which remained at my disposal. And yet the direction of the principal attack of Kuroki's army has not yet been ascertained. The 10th Corps, and in particular, the 3rd have more need than you of reinforcements. I invite you, on your personal responsibility, to send back immediately General Levestam with six battalions, relieving them with the units of the 5th Division of Chasseurs (the five battalions of the 2nd Siberians). Moreover, I write to you as to a military chief who ought not to interpret narrowly the mission which is confided to him, or to think only of himself. Do not lose sight of the fact that each battalion which you fail to return to me may exercise influence on the success of the operations which have been confided to me; and that, conversely, your retention without justification or authorisation of more than ten battalions, will render you morally responsible for defeat, if such should occur."<sup>1</sup>

It would appear that the strain of battle was commencing to tell on General Kuropatkin's nerves. It

<sup>1</sup> *Russian Official History.*

is unfair to throw responsibility for failure on the shoulders of a subordinate who is doing his best ; it is unwise to do so at a critical moment on the battlefield—however useful it may be after the event—for it destroys confidence in the leader ; it is especially unwise to mention the word “ defeat ” at such a moment.

General Stakelberg immediately, without replying to the above letter, returned the ten battalions of the 4th Siberians.

By dawn of the 31st the 1st Siberians had accumulated a reserve of eleven battalions, twenty-two guns, and Gourko's cavalry of six squadrons ; the 3rd Siberians had brought back twelve battalions into reserve ; and the 10th Corps, which held a very extended line, had brought back six battalions. General Mishchenko had returned the squadrons lent to him by General Samsonov, and now had twenty-one squadrons, twenty guns, and two battalions ; while General Samsonov had nineteen squadrons and six guns. The Russian troops had lost 3000 men in this day's fighting ; while the Japanese had lost over 5000. The morale of the Russian troops was high ; they had repulsed all attacks ; the 3rd Siberians and a regiment of the 4th had even delivered successful counter-attacks ; finally, the Japanese had been repulsed with terrible losses at Port Arthur. The leading regiment of the 1st European Corps had also arrived from Europe.

It appeared to the Russians, on the night of the 30th, that the Japanese were devoting their efforts to the attempt to pierce between the 1st and 3rd

Siberians, and to envelop the former on both flanks. They believed that three Japanese divisions were employed against the 1st Siberians; two to two and a half against the 3rd Siberians and the right of the 10th Corps. Thus five to five and a half divisions were accounted for. But according to the Russian estimate there were the equivalent of twelve to thirteen divisions in front of them; and there were thus six and a half to eight divisions still unaccounted for. General Kuropatkin, in reporting to the Czar on this date, considered that a part of Kuroki's army had not yet been engaged; and that they might be expected to cross to the right bank of the Tai-tzu Ho. For though there were not as yet any signs of preparations to cross the river, still small parties of Japanese had appeared on the left bank between Ying-Shou-pu and the Tang River; secret Chinese agents had reported the movement of hostile troops on both sides of the railway, and also indicated the confluence of the Tang and Tai-tzu rivers as the point of passage. The Japanese had also drawn off from the front of the 10th Corps, and large masses had been seen moving east in the direction of the Tai-tzu River. General Kuropatkin directed General Sluchevski to execute a reconnaissance on the 31st to ascertain what was in front of him; he also ordered the corps in front line to assume the offensive at the discretion of corps commanders "at all points where it appeared possible and useful." He praised the troops for their gallantry, and directed them to undertake enterprises during the night. He ordered General Orlov's

detachment to move down the railway from Sha Ho to Yen-tai; and at 1.15 a.m. on the 31st he issued a provisional order to the effect that, if the Japanese crossed the Tai-tzu in force, he would fall back to the main lines of defence (A-A), concentrate a reserve, and attack the enemy on the right bank of the river. Preparations had been made for this contingency during the 30th. The forts on the southern face of Liao-yang had been garrisoned by a regiment of the 5th Siberians and placed under General Sasulitch. The sick and wounded, together with stores and everything which could be removed, were being despatched by rail to Mukden.

The outposts of the hostile armies were in close touch throughout the night, and firing was continuous. The Russian troops were kept hard at work repairing the defences, parts of which had been demolished by the Japanese artillery fire. The wounded had to be removed, put into trains and sent off to Mukden; the dead had to be buried; food and ammunition had to be issued. And they had to be in readiness to meet a Japanese assault at any moment. Let us consider the nature of the efforts which these troops were required to put forth. They had been fighting continuously for sixteen hours; it had rained steadily throughout the 28th, 29th, and 30th; the men were wet through without a chance of drying their clothes; no fires were allowed, and therefore the men could get no hot food.<sup>1</sup> Apprehension of night

<sup>1</sup> Later in the war, at the Battle of the Sha Ho, the Russians possessed travelling kitchens.

assaults was by no means unwarranted. The Japanese assaulted Hill 693 at midnight, and the assault was repeated several times until 1.30 a.m. on the 31st. They also assaulted the Russian line north of Ma-yeh-tun at 2 a.m.; and again at 3 a.m. they assaulted the whole of the Russian line north of Ma-yeh-tun which was facing west. All these assaults were repulsed; but at 4 a.m. another assault was delivered, which resulted in the capture of two Russian trenches. These trenches were held by the Japanese until daylight, when they were themselves assaulted and driven out. The Japanese 5th Division also assaulted the left of the 1st Siberians. The 3rd Siberians, however, assaulted a village held by the Japanese, but were repulsed. During the night General Oku brought up into position seventy-two heavy guns, thus increasing the number of Japanese guns deployed against the 1st Siberians to 306.

In the meantime, on this date, the 30th, General Kuroki had completed his preparations for effecting the passage of the Tai-tzu. He and his staff had arrived at the conclusion that the Russians were about to retreat. From the heights at 1800 they saw, as they believed, Russian troops on both banks of the Tai-tzu retreating towards Liao-yang, as well as numerous trains leaving the town for the north. General Kuroki, therefore, acting on his own initiative, issued orders for the passage of the river to be commenced during the night. The 12th Division was to cross at a ford about a mile north of Kan-sha, and advance round the bend of the river to Kung-Ku-fen.

A bridge was to be constructed at the bend of the river west of Ying-Shou-pu. The artillery of the 2nd Division was to be posted west of the same place to assist the 12th Division; and the infantry of the 15th Brigade (of the 2nd Division) was to follow the 12th Division across the river. The Guard Reserve Brigade was to advance from Chiao-tou on the 31st towards Pen-hsi-hu. The Guard Division was to co-operate with the 4th Army; and, as news of the Russian counter-attack against the left of the 10th Division now reached General Kuroki, he left the other brigade of the 2nd Division (the 3rd Brigade) with three batteries to assist the Guard. Hence General Kuroki, with the equivalent of two divisions, was about to cross the Tai-tzu River with a view to intercepting the Russian retreat. The Tai-tzu River was in flood owing to the recent heavy rains; the fords had, for the most part, disappeared; and the Japanese had experienced considerable difficulty in finding one at Kan-sha. The fords in this river had a habit of changing their positions during the rains. Thus, General Kuroki, acting under a misapprehension, was about to cross a serious obstacle with a weak force, and to place himself in a position which had been foreseen by the Russians, and for which they had made careful preparations. Was it a deliberate trap set by General Kuropatkin, such as that set by Napoleon at Austerlitz? Was the misapprehension under which the Japanese were acting due to false reports set on foot by General Kuropatkin? Let us note the position of the 17th Corps, of Orlov's

detachment, and the retreat of Liubavin's infantry. General Kuropatkin had already collected a considerable force in a semicircle round the area in which he expected the Japanese to cross the river. But it is one thing to set a trap, it is another thing to ensure that the trap shall close at the required moment. It is also essential that the trap should be of sufficient strength; as, otherwise, the wild beast caught in it is apt to smash it to pieces.

31st AUGUST, 1904.

During the night of the 30th–31st the 12th Japanese division waded the Tai-tzu, the water being up to the men's chests; and by 4 a.m. on the 31st its advanced guard of two battalions had seized Yen-chu-cheng. By 11 a.m. its 23rd Brigade had joined its advanced guard, and Kuan-tun had been seized, a party of 250 Russians being expelled. By 1.30 p.m. the 12th Brigade had joined the 23rd, deploying on its right; while at 3 p.m. the 15th Brigade (of the 2nd Division) had come up on the left. The troops halted in this position for the night of the 31st August–1st September. During the afternoon there was an exchange of fire between the artillery of the 2nd Division west of Ying-Shou-pu and Russian guns posted near Hsi-kuan tun.

It will be remembered that, on the 29th August, General Liubavin had been left with cavalry alone to watch the line of the Tai-tzu River above and below Pen-hsi-hu, his infantry having retired to the neighbourhood of Pien-niu-lu-pu. His squadrons were



distributed as follows : Four squadrons at Pen-hsi-hu, one at Tao-ting-shan, two at San-chia-tzu, while, in reserve, about two miles north of Pen-hsi-hu, were three squadrons with four guns. At 3 a.m. on the 31st a Japanese infantry detachment surprised the Russian squadron at Tao-ting-shan, scattering it in all directions. One trooper carried the news to General Liubavin, who immediately marched off with his reserve to Tao-ting-shan. In the darkness, when approaching a pass a short distance east of Pen-hsi-hu, his squadrons rode into the Japanese, and were received with a heavy volley. They were thrown into confusion, and retreated along the road to Mukden. At daybreak a Japanese battalion crossed the river at Pen-hsi-hu, and General Liubavin thereupon gave orders to his whole detachment to retreat. Small parties of Japanese simultaneously crossed the river, below Pen-hsi-hu, as far as its confluence with the Lan Ho. These troops were the Japanese Guard Reserve Brigade, which had thus seized the passages over the river along a front of fifteen miles. General Liubavin retreated to the Toumenling Pass ; but, at 4 p.m., on the approach of the Japanese, he continued his retreat, leaving the infantry of his detachment to hold the pass. It is doubtful whether he reported these events to General Kuropatkin, though he mentioned to the colonel commanding his infantry that at least two Japanese battalions were in possession of Pen-hsi-hu ; and this information ultimately reached Russian Headquarters. The Russian Headquarters had received much conflicting information as to the pas-

sage of the river. As early as the 28th it was reported that two Japanese battalions had crossed, and this had proved to be false. Since that date numerous reports had been received of the passage of the river; but these had, for the most part, been contradicted. The Headquarters Staff, therefore, decided to await definite and certain information from General Bilderling before taking action.

While these movements were in progress on the right bank of the Tai-tzu Ho, the remainder of the Japanese forces had again, on the 31st, advanced to the attack. The first attack was delivered as early as 3.20 a.m. against the right of the 3rd Siberians, but it was repulsed; and, after this, owing to a misunderstanding, the 3rd Siberians were not seriously attacked. The Guard and the 10th Divisions had received orders to co-operate with one another and to attack after the artillery bombardment. But the artillery bombardment against the 3rd Siberians and 10th Corps failed, for the Japanese guns were out-matched by those of the Russians, and finally reduced to silence. The Guard and the 10th Division each waited for orders, thinking that General Nodzu was in command. General Nodzu was, however, with the 5th Division of his army, which was assisting the 2nd Army. Hence the fighting in this quarter of the field resolved itself into an artillery duel.

On the Russian right, however, the fighting was of a very different nature. At dawn, at 4.30 a.m., the Japanese artillery opened fire, and by 6 a.m. the whole positions of the 1st Siberians were subjected to

a terrific cannonade. The bursting shells raised thick clouds of suffocating smoke and dust, under cover of which the Japanese infantry advanced to the assault. The Japanese guns were posted in a semicircle round the Russian positions, with the result that no point of security could be found in which to post the reserves. Nevertheless, all the assaults were repulsed except at one point. Near Hsin-li-tun the Japanese carried the Russian trenches by storm, and brought a severe enfilade fire to bear to right and left. The situation was critical for the Russians, but reserves were hastily scraped together, and all available artillery was directed on the captured trenches. The Japanese gunners, unaware that the trenches had been captured, also directed their fire on to the victorious Japanese infantry, which was with difficulty holding the captured positions.

These unfortunate Japanese infantry were attacked from three sides and shelled from all four. The trenches they occupied were quickly covered with a thick curtain of smoke and dust, into which a hail of projectiles was poured. The Japanese held out for a certain period,<sup>1</sup> but finally sprang to their feet with one accord and fled, suffering severely from Russian fire until they were out of range.

The Japanese attacks on the extreme Russian right had also failed. At 2 p.m. the 4th Japanese Division was placed at the disposal of General Oku, who at once ordered it to attack on the left of the 6th

<sup>1</sup> The time at which the trenches were captured by the Japanese is not known, but they were driven out at 1 p.m.

Division. Hardly, however, had the order been received when a report arrived to the effect that large Russian forces were advancing south from Pei-tai; and the 4th Division immediately moved in that direction to meet this threat. The report was due to the advance of General Mishchenko, who attacked Wu-lun-tai with one battalion and five squadrons. The attack was repulsed; but it served to keep the 4th Japanese Division inactive throughout the afternoon. When, towards evening, the 4th Division learned the true state of affairs it was too late to execute the projected attack.

General Mishchenko had been directed to cover the Russian right flank; but he had, during the morning, been informed that large Japanese forces had crossed to the right bank of the Tai-tzu River east of Liao-yang, and he was directed to cross the river with his detachment after dusk. He therefore sent all his transport across the river, and attacked Wu-lun-tai at 10 a.m., but without success. He again attacked this same village at 2 p.m. by order of General Kuropatkin, but employed the same troops which had been repulsed in the morning, and was again repulsed. It was this latter attack which had the effect of checking the advance of the Japanese 4th Division; and it serves to illustrate the extreme solicitude that the very best troops will always display for the security of their flanks. The best and most gallant troops will not for long face enfilade and converging fire from modern weapons.

Though all the Japanese attacks had been repulsed,

yet the 1st Siberians had been hard pressed. There were but three battalions left in reserve, notwithstanding that two battalions of the 4th Siberians had been sent forward as reinforcements. The troops of the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Siberians in the trenches were inextricably mingled; and before dusk a heavy bombardment of the Russian positions seemed to be the prelude to night assaults.

On the extreme Russian left the 10th Corps had not been attacked; though, from time to time, a few Japanese batteries had replied to the intermittent fire of the Russian batteries. General Vassiliev, who commanded the section of the 10th Corps between the Feng-huang-Cheng—Liao-yang road and Hsia-pu, seeing that the Japanese were drawing off from his front, and suspecting that they were crossing the Tai-tzu, decided to assume the offensive. At 8.30 a.m. he sent forward a battalion which occupied a high ridge without opposition about a mile and a half in front of his positions. But at the same time he reported his action by telephone to General Kuropatkin. He was immediately ordered to suspend his offensive on the grounds that an advance would lengthen the already extended line held by the 10th Corps, and would therefore enfeeble that corps. He was also told that, if the Japanese forces in his front were insignificant, he was to send all the troops he could spare back to the General Reserve in order that the largest possible force should be accumulated with a view to the contemplated offensive on the right bank of the Tai-tzu.

General Sir Ian Hamilton says that at this time the lines of communication of both the 2nd and 12th Japanese Divisions crossed the River Tang at An-ping, and that there were no troops to defend this point except four companies of infantry posted in the valley of the Tang, between Hsia-pu and An-ping. He states that a Russian offensive on An-ping, even though ultimately repulsed, would probably have disorganised the transport of the 2nd and 12th Divisions to such an extent as to immobilise those two divisions for several weeks to come. The 3rd Brigade of the 2nd Japanese Division was several miles distant from An-ping to the westward; while the remainder of the 2nd Division was about to follow the 12th Division across the Tai-tzu near Kan-sha.

General Vassiliev was obliged to suspend his offensive; though his scouts pushed forward and were able to penetrate into the trenches which had been occupied by the Japanese on the preceding evening. These were found to be deserted; and there were signs that the Japanese had withdrawn from them in haste. His mounted scouts also saw at about 4 p.m. a large Japanese convoy moving from An-ping up the valley of the Tang River towards Kan-sha. But nothing was attempted, for Order No. 3 had been issued by General Kuropatkin as early as 6 a.m. on the 31st, in which he gave instructions for the retreat into the main defences of Liao-yang and the accumulation of a great reserve with which to assume the offensive against the Japanese

on the right bank of the river. All preparations for this movement were to be made, but the actual execution was to be deferred until the receipt of a telegram from General Kuropatkin. That telegram was despatched at 7.20 p.m. At 11 a.m. on the 31st the Russian General Staff had formed the following estimate of the Japanese forces: 30,000 men west of the railway; two divisions, probably the 7th and 8th,<sup>1</sup> between the railway and the main road from Liao-yang to Korea, and about one and a half divisions east of that road. There were still, therefore, six to eight Japanese divisions unaccounted for according to the Russian estimate of the Japanese strength.

As the "direction of the principal shock" had not yet been discovered it was considered necessary to:

1. "Preserve intact the general reserve of the army."

2. Be in readiness to reinforce "those sections of the very extended positions of the Russian army which had not yet been attacked in force, but which, manifestly, might be attacked."<sup>2</sup>

Here we see the difficulty of directing this so-called "defensive-offensive" battle. How is it possible to preserve intact a general reserve if at the same time those portions of the line of battle which have not yet been seriously attacked are to be reinforced? As we have seen, the portion of the line which had been seriously attacked had already been strongly

<sup>1</sup> The 7th and 8th Divisions were actually in Japan at this time.

<sup>2</sup> *Conférences*, vol. iv. p. 43.

reinforced, and now the other parts of the line were to be reinforced.

It was not until 11 a.m. on the 31st that the passage of the Tai-tzu Ho was definitely reported to General Kuropatkin by the Commander of the 17th Corps. The telephone had broken down. It had been reported by the cavalry as early as 6.30 a.m., that the Japanese had occupied the high ground east of Kuan-tun, and appeared to be moving west. A long column of infantry could be seen crossing the river. At 7.30 a.m. the Japanese force was estimated at one division, with artillery and a regiment of cavalry. At 11.30 a.m. a brigade of the 17th Corps was ordered to occupy a position at Hsi-kuan-tun, and to push forward an advanced guard with artillery to shell the point of passage. Hsi-kuan-tun and Erh-tao-kou are at the extremity of a range of hills which run from thence to the south-west by 900 to 1057, and overlook the Tai-tzu River. It was on this range that the 17th Corps had been posted, prolonging, on the right bank, the line held by the 10th Corps. The extreme left of the 17th Corps was, consequently, at Hsi-kuan-tun. It was now reinforced, a whole division being posted in this neighbourhood. Eight battalions with forty-eight guns were in first line about Hsi-kuan-tun, and eight battalions with fifty-six guns were posted in reserve about Erh-tao-kou.

General Kuropatkin had now received the information he had awaited. As he said in his report to the Czar, there was now reason to suppose that Kuroki,



having drawn off from the front of the 10th Corps, was engaged with the bulk of his force in a turning movement round the Russian left, with a view to acting against the Russian communications. Here, again, he had fathomed the Japanese intentions. General Kuropatkin now had to decide on his course of action. According to his view there were two possible alternatives :

1. To contain Kuroki, and throw the bulk of his force against Oku and Nodzu on the left bank of the river.

2. To contain the two last, falling back on the inner line of defence round Liao-yang, and throw the bulk of his force against Kuroki on the right bank of the river.

He decided on the latter, and his reasons for doing so are given both in his own book and in the *Conférences*.

As regards the first alternative, he writes : “ Even if we were successful against Oku and Nodzu, they could always fall back on their communications if in difficulties, and so draw us away from Liao-yang, while any success by Kuroki which might lead to an attack by him on our communications would threaten us with catastrophe.” General Kuropatkin points out that portions of Kuroki’s army were only eleven miles from the railway. “ In order to collect sufficient force,” he continues, “ to move against the two armies, it would have been necessary to have contained Kuroki with only such troops as were on the right bank of the river—namely, the 17th Corps and two

regiments of the 54th Division<sup>1</sup> (total, forty battalions) under Bilderling. But as these troops were not yet seasoned, it was impossible to rely on their performing such an extremely difficult task as that of holding in check Kuroki's superior numbers on the necessarily extended position they would have to occupy (this fear was justified by subsequent events). These considerations led to the adoption of the second alternative."<sup>2</sup>

Other arguments were also brought forward in favour of this view. By withdrawing to the inner and shorter line of defence round Liao-yang, a large force could be accumulated for action against Kuroki. The main object of the Russians was also remembered, that is, to avoid a decisive battle until they possessed superior numbers. Reinforcements were continually arriving, and sooner or later the Russians would accumulate far superior numerical strength. Hence, the *Conférences* say: "The principal aim of our action must be to assure the security of the communications." General Kuropatkin also points out that only 6000 men had been sent out from Russia to repair wastage and bring units up to their establishments. At the commencement of the battle, the army was 15,000 men short of its establishment. On the 1st September the 10th Corps could only muster 12,000 rifles, while the 1st Siberians numbered only 10,000. The whole force which could be brought against General Kuroki would not number more than

<sup>1</sup> That is, of the 5th Siberians.

<sup>2</sup> *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, vol. ii. pp. 230-231.

50,000 to 55,000 rifles,<sup>1</sup> and Kuroki was believed to have 65,000 to 70,000 men.

There was yet another argument: the Russian artillery had fired 100,000 rounds of ammunition in two days; the quantity of artillery ammunition which would be required had been altogether underestimated, and there remained on the evening of the 31st but 10,000<sup>2</sup> rounds in army reserve. General Kuropatkin telegraphed to the Minister of War on the 1st September, and was informed that 84,000 rounds should arrive at Lake Baikal between the 21st and 29th August—not very consoling! For this reason alone the temporary interruption of the railway line must prove disastrous.

Much debate has already arisen on the subject of General Kuropatkin's wisest move at this juncture. There are those who uphold his action; there are those who maintain that he should have assumed the offensive with the 10th Corps up the left bank of the Tai-tzu, across Kuroki's communications; and, if he had known the exact situation, he might perhaps have done so. It will, doubtless, be said that had he possessed the "eagle eye" of the great leader he would have recognised and seized his opportunity. It is worth noting, however, that in modern warfare, with its enormous armies,

<sup>1</sup> The 1st and 3rd Siberians, 10th and 17th Corps, numbering, together with some troops of the 5th Siberians, ninety-five battalions, sixty squadrons, and 342 guns. The *Conférences* give the strength of this force as 67,000 bayonets and 5000 sabres.

<sup>2</sup> The *Russian Official History* gives it at 24,000 rounds on the night of the 31st August.

extended battlefields, and smokeless powder, it is the eagle mind's-eye—the power to divine the adversary's intentions and the courage to act on probabilities—that the great leader must possess. There are others who suggest that the 10th Corps should have assumed the offensive against the right of the Guard in conjunction with an offensive by Mishchenko, Samsonov, and the 4th Siberians against Oku's left; there are yet others who recommend a general offensive in every quarter of the field—the 17th Corps, together with the Pen-hsi-hu detachment and Orlov's detachment, to attack Kuroki, the 10th Corps to swing to its right against the flank of the Guard in conjunction with the 3rd Siberians, while Mishchenko and Samsonov and the 4th Siberians attacked Oku's left in conjunction with the 1st Siberians.

The reader may decide for himself which of these alternatives would have held out the greater prospects of success. General Kuropatkin had, however, long since decided on his plan; and it is generally admitted that it is unwise for a general to change his plans at the last moment. We would also do well to bear in mind Hamley's dictum: "That army whose flank or communications are most immediately threatened will abandon the initiative and conform to the movement of its adversary"; and especially will that maxim hold good in the case of an army 5000 miles distant from its main resources and connected with its base by a single line of railway and one bad road.

General Kuropatkin's design was to defend the main

lines at Liao-yang with the 2nd and 4th Siberians, reinforced to the required strength, under the orders of General Zarubaiev; to reconnoitre and delay the Japanese on the right bank of the Tai-tzu with the 17th Corps, Orlov's detachment, and Samsonov's cavalry; and, finally, to attack them with the 1st and 3rd Siberians, the 10th Corps, portions of the 5th Siberians, and Mishchenko's cavalry.

Order No. 3 directed the 4th Siberians to hold the western face of Liao-yang from Fort No. 8 to the railway; and for the 2nd Siberians, reinforced by eight battalions and eighteen guns of the 10th Corps, to hold the southern face from the railway to the Tai-tzu. The forces detailed for the defence of Liao-yang numbered seventy-two battalions, 184 guns, fourteen squadrons, and three sapper battalions.

A special detachment of two battalions and sixteen guns of the 10th Corps was detailed to defend Muechang.

The remainder of the 10th Corps, numbering twenty-two battalions, seventy-nine guns, and four squadrons, was to cross the Tai-tzu by a bridge east of the city and march to Hsin-Cheng, two miles east of Liao-yang.

The 3rd Siberians were to retreat to the northern face of Liao-yang in readiness to cross the river.

The 1st Siberians were to cross the river north of Liao-yang and march to Liu-chia-chuang.

These movements were to be executed during the night of the 31st August-1st September.

General Orlov's detachment (eight battalions and two batteries and three squadrons of the 5th Siberians) was ordered to arrive at noon on the 1st at Chan-hsi-tun, behind the 17th Corps, where it was to come under the orders of General Bilderling; but shortly after its destination was changed to Hsiao-ta-lien-kou, and then again changed to the Yen-tai Mines. General Orlov was directed to cover the left flank of the 17th Corps and to reconnoitre the strength and dispositions of the enemy. He was told that, if the enemy advanced down the right bank of the Tai-tzu, he was to act against its right flank, but that if he himself was attacked by superior forces, he was to retire on Yen-tai Railway station on the main line.

General Ekk's mixed detachment, consisting of three battalions of the 5th Siberians, the four newly arrived battalions of the 1st European Corps, and one battery, was also placed under General Bilderling's orders, and was directed to Chan-hsi-tun.

General Samsonov, with nineteen squadrons and six guns, was ordered to march rapidly during the night of the 31st August-1st September to the Yen-tai Mines. He was to cover the left flank of General Orlov's detachment and that of the 17th Corps; he was also to "send reconnaissances in the direction of the Tai-tzu Ho," to keep touch with the "Daghestan" regiment of dragoons which was watching the neighbourhood of Pen-hsi-lu, and which was in touch with General Liubavin's detachment further to the east. He was to report direct to Army Headquarters and also to the 17th Corps.

Mishchenko was ordered to return his two infantry battalions to the 4th Siberians, and to take his cavalry, twelve squadrons and two batteries, across the Tai-tzu by a bridge north of Liao-yang.

The above movements commenced after dark, at about 9 p.m.

In the meantime, on the evening of the 31st, Marshal Oyama called on the 2nd Army for a further effort, and the 3rd Division and 11th Reserve Brigade were directed to assault again at midnight.<sup>1</sup> The troops moved forward accordingly, to find that the Russians had evacuated their positions, and by 3 a.m. on the 1st September the Japanese were in possession of the positions they had striven so gallantly to capture. They were, however, in no condition to follow up the Russians, and it was not until 4 p.m. on the 1st September that the Japanese were able to advance and to bring up some heavy guns to shell Liao-yang. It seems evident that the Imperial Japanese Headquarters ordered the attack in the hope of holding the Russians to their positions south of Liao-yang, and so preventing any attempt to concentrate superior forces against Kuroki on the right bank of the Tai-tzu. The unexpected retreat of the Russians and the disappearance of the Russian cavalry clearly portended an overwhelming attack on Kuroki, and the news seems to have caused considerable uneasiness at the Japanese Imperial Headquarters.

<sup>1</sup> This reserve brigade had already been heavily engaged during the day.

The Russian retreat must, it will be seen, have been conducted admirably. It was executed in perfect silence. And yet the difficulties of the operation must have been enormous. Battalions of the 2nd and 4th Siberians were mingled with the troops of the 1st Siberians in the firing line. Nevertheless, these battalions were required as garrison of Liao-yang, and were extricated during the night and early morning. The 1st Siberians commenced their retreat at 9 p.m. on the 31st, and by the early morning of the 1st had reached their destination, as had also the 3rd Siberians and 10th Corps.

Early on the morning of the 1st a report was received from General Bilderling which had been despatched at 9 p.m. the previous night. Japanese infantry patrols had been observed during the afternoon of the 31st moving north towards the Yen-tai Mines. At 5 p.m. the Japanese had been observed from Height 1057 throwing a bridge across the river near Yen-chu-cheng. A column of infantry had immediately commenced to cross, and had continued crossing until 6 p.m., at which time artillery apparently commenced to cross. The rain and mist, however, had rendered observation difficult. General Bilderling wrote: "This audacious movement in view of our positions, and the passage of important forces to the right bank of the Tai-tzu Ho during the course of the day, leads me to conclude that, in order to delay the ultimate offensive of the enemy towards the north, it is indispensable to send fresh troops to-morrow towards my left flank." General Bilderling



then mentioned that his transport was threatened, and asked that another route might be detailed for the use of it. On this message General Kuropatkin wrote: "It is necessary for me to draw up quickly a plan for our offensive. It is very desirable to concentrate to-day, to deploy to-morrow, and to attack the day after, the 3rd September." His idea was to deploy on the front Manju-Yama—Yen-tai Mines; and, pivoting on his right, on the 17th Corps, to drive the Japanese back on to the Taitzu River.

On the face of it his projected action appears to have been dilatory. But we must take into consideration the work which had been performed and the hardships which had been endured by the troops. Since the 25th, that is, for seven days, the 1st and 3rd Siberians had fought almost continuously, and the nights when fighting was not in progress had been devoted to improving the fortifications, or to marching or to redistribution. The latter had involved much marching to and fro, especially in the case of battalions lent from and returned to the General Reserve. The troops had marched some ten to twelve miles during this very night, and they still had a march of ten to fourteen miles before they could deploy against Kuroki. And throughout all this period the rain had fallen in torrents, and the movement of troops was slow and terribly hard on the men. The troops of the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Siberians were, indeed, almost exhausted.

But, it will be argued, the Japanese troops had

put forth equal if not more strenuous efforts. That is true. It becomes evident that this matter of winning battles is largely a question of the powers of endurance of the troops, and that the best plans may easily break down if the troops cannot stand the strain required of them. In this case, however, General Kuropatkin possessed on the morning of the 1st two corps, the 17th and the 10th, neither of which were exhausted. Only one division of the 17th had as yet been engaged. The 10th had had two days' rest, had marched some eight miles only, and was within eight miles of the 17th Corps. Could not these two corps have assumed the offensive on the 2nd, or even on the afternoon of the 1st? These, in conjunction with Orlov's twelve battalions and Samsonov's nineteen squadrons, would have given him a force of over 30,000 men with which to strike. General Kuropatkin, however, overestimated the strength of General Kuroki; it was believed that some 30,000 to 35,000 Japanese had already effected the passage of the river; and he feared, moreover, to withdraw the 17th Corps from its positions lest the Japanese should force the passage of the river between the Tang Ho and Liao-yang; for, it will be remembered, Chinese agents had indicated the junction of the Tang and Tai-tzu as the point of passage of the river. If General Kuropatkin had sent forward the 10th and 17th Corps to attack Kuroki on the 1st, and if these had been beaten, he would have been severely criticised for sending forward his troops to attack

in driblets. A defeated general is sure to be criticised whatever he does. Nevertheless, why was it necessary to make two distinct operations of the concentration and deployment of his force? That force could, without much difficulty, have been deployed by the evening of the 1st in readiness to attack on the morning of the 2nd. There existed the danger that the division of the 17th Corps at Hsi-kuan-tun, the "advanced guard," as General Kuropatkin termed it, might be attacked; and, in that case, there existed the further danger that, in place of a general offensive executed by all available forces simultaneously, it might become necessary to send forward troops in driblets to reinforce the 17th Corps. It is a dangerous thing in modern war for an army to be caught by the enemy before it is deployed for battle.

The information received by the Russians was very conflicting. On the one hand, a Chinese rumour said that large Japanese forces were massing west of the railway and advancing northwards, while Japanese troops were being brought up the Tai-tzu River in boats, and that it was the Japanese intention to attack Liao-yang on both sides simultaneously; another report said that the Japanese, having lost 15,000 men on the 31st, were retreating on Hai-Cheng. The movement of Japanese across the river to the eastward of Liao-yang certainly tended to corroborate the first of these reports.

In this connection it must be remembered that, up to this time, the Russians had only been able to account for five and a half Japanese divisions,

and that they believed the Japanese armies to consist of twelve to thirteen divisions. There were thus still six to seven and a half divisions unaccounted for. What more likely than that a portion of this force should have crossed the river at Kan-sha and to the eastward, and that the remainder of it should be moving northward to the west of the railway line.

Thus, in the Russian estimation, the problem to be dealt with was a tremendous one. It is essential to try and regard it through the spectacles of the Russian General Staff and not through our own of to-day.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE BATTLE OF LIAO-YANG.

THE SECOND PHASE, 1st SEPTEMBER, 1904.

AT 6 a.m. on the 1st September General Nodzu heard of the Russian retreat, and immediately ordered the advance of the 4th Army. The two divisions of this army pressed forward to within two miles of the southern front of the Liao-yang defences. The right of the 10th Division was within two miles of the Tai-tzu, while the left of the 5th was within two miles of the railway. The 10th Kobi Brigade was held in reserve about three miles in rear of the divisions.

The 4th Division of the 2nd Army advanced at about 4 p.m. west of the railway, and wheeling to its right took post opposite the western front of the Liao-yang defences. Its right was on the railway; and the 1st Cavalry Brigade moved up and covered its left. The 3rd and 6th Divisions and the 11th Kobi Brigade remained halted astride the railway near Ma-yeh-tun.

It will be seen that the Guard Division and the brigade of the 2nd Division had been squeezed out of the line of battle. The Guard Division con-

sequently moved somewhat to its right, overlooking the Tai-tzu in the neighbourhood of Hsia-pu, with a view to crossing the river at that point.

The artillery of the 2nd Division had already been sent across the river during the night, and the 3rd Brigade was now ordered to cross to join the remainder of its division.

On the left bank of the river the 1st September passed practically without fighting, the Japanese contenting themselves with reconnoitring the Russian positions and making the necessary preparations for attack. On the right bank of the river, however, important events occurred.

General Kuroki still believed that the Russians were retreating, and that, therefore, it was his mission to intercept or at least threaten their line of retreat. He was warned early on the 1st by Marshal Oyama not to commit his force until the situation was clearer; but hearing that the Russians had retreated before the 2nd and 4th Armies, and, doubtless, misled by the trains which could be seen leaving Liao-yang for the north, he became more firmly convinced that the Russians were retreating, and he therefore resolved to execute his original intention and endeavour to force his way to the railway line.

On the morning of the 1st September the 17th Russian Corps was distributed as follows: Eight battalions, thirty-six guns, and two squadrons holding Height 1057. Seven and a half battalions, 104 guns, and six and a half squadrons holding

Height 920,<sup>1</sup> Hsi-kuan-tun and Manju-Yama. Nine battalions, which were joined at about 10 a.m. by General Orbeliani's two battalions, were posted in reserve near Sha-ho-tun; while General Ekk's mixed detachment was also in reserve behind Height 920, and had been placed under the orders of General Bilderling. General Dobrjinski, who commanded the 35th Division (17th Corps) which was holding Hsi-kuan-tun and Manju-Yama, had been ordered to reconnoitre the "front and depth" of the Japanese with patrols, but "without having recourse to fighting." General Orbeliani's cavalry, twelve squadrons and six guns, was at Fang-shen. Mishchenko arrived before dawn at a point about two miles west of Sha-ho-tun. Samsonov's cavalry also arrived before dawn at Yen-tai Mines, having marched about twenty-five miles during the night. General Orlov's detachment arrived at Yen-tai Mines between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. on the 1st, and immediately commenced to entrench a position facing east and south-east.

During the morning General Orbeliani reported that Japanese battalions were bivouacking at Ta-yao and Ta-yao-pu. On this information Bilderling telegraphed to General Kuropatkin: "Thus we can consider that it is definitely established that a considerable force of Kuroki's army, 30,000 to 35,000 men, have crossed to the right bank of the Tai-tzu at Kuan-tun." About the same time a report was received to the effect that the Japanese had

<sup>1</sup> 920 feet above sea level, but only about 350 feet above the valley of the Tai-tzu.

crossed the Tai-tzu at Pen-hsi-hu and were marching on Mukden. On this report Kuropatkin wrote: "An offensive movement from Pen-hsi-hu on Mukden has been unmasked; and, in place of Orlov's detachment, which has been brought away from that quarter, I intend to detrain two regiments of the 1st Corps at Mukden." It appears that at this same time General Kuropatkin was informed of the retreat of General Liubavin to the neighbourhood of Pien-niu-lu-pu.<sup>1</sup>

At 2 p.m. General Dembovski, who commanded the 5th Siberians, of which General Orlov's detachment formed part, asked that "in view of the accumulation of Japanese forces" at Yen-tai Mines, Orlov might be reinforced by the troops of the 1st Corps which were arriving at Mukden; but this request was refused by General Kuropatkin, who evidently considered that he had sufficient troops at Yen-tai Mines, and that reinforcements were more urgently required on the Mukden—Pen-hsi-hu road.

Thus we see that General Kuroki, with a force of twenty battalions, seventy-two guns, and three squadrons, was about to attack a Russian force of thirty-eight battalions, fifty-four squadrons, and 150 guns.<sup>2</sup> More than that, he was about to attempt to pierce through the centre of this force, with a strong body of all arms on his right flank, and a

<sup>1</sup>It is uncertain whether this report emanated from General Liubavin or whether it gave any details beyond the fact that the Japanese had crossed at Pen-hsi-hu and were marching on Mukden.

<sup>2</sup>This does not include the portion of the 17th Corps posted on Height 1057 nor the detachments of Liubavin, Peterev, and Madritov.



detachment (Liubavin's) in his rear. At first glance the destruction of the Japanese would appear to have been inevitable; but the moment we weigh the fighting values of the opposing forces the prospect becomes very different; for General Sir Ian Hamilton has written that, at this period, the Japanese soldier was, in mountain fighting, equal to three Russians. True, the fighting was not to take place in mountains, but the mountains had merely been replaced by *Kao-liang*, for the whole country between the Japanese positions and Manju-Yama and Wu-ting Shan, was a "sea of *Kao-liang*," growing to a height of ten to twelve feet. These crops, in conjunction with deep ravines, rendered the movement of troops exceedingly difficult—an advantage to the better trained troops and to the assailant. If we add to the superiority of the Japanese soldier the proved superiority of the Japanese leadership, and the fact that they were about to attack raw troops<sup>1</sup> standing on the defensive, the destruction, or even the failure of the Japanese, was by no means a foregone conclusion.

At 7 a.m. on the 1st, the 12th Japanese Division despatched one brigade, the 12th, to the north as a flank guard. It occupied Wu-ting Shan without opposition.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, its other brigade,

<sup>1</sup> Orlov's detachment consisted almost entirely of reservists of the 2nd category who had but just arrived from Europe.

<sup>2</sup> It seems remarkable that General Orbeliani's detachment neglected to occupy this important and conspicuous point of observation if only as a necessary measure for its own security. It had, apparently, been within three miles of the hill since the afternoon of the 21st. This neglect was to lead to serious consequences.

the 23rd, advanced against Kung-Ku-fen, driving the five companies of Russians from that place without difficulty. The 2nd Guard Kobi Regiment<sup>1</sup> and one battalion—three battalions in all—were held in divisional reserve and posted in rear of the right of the 12th Brigade. The 15th Brigade of the 2nd Division moved forward on the left of the 12th Division.

One battalion of the 3rd Brigade of the 2nd Division arrived about 6 a.m.; but the bulk of the brigade remained on the left bank of the river awaiting the construction of a second bridge. In the meantime the Japanese entrenched their positions from Kung-Ku-fen to Wu-ting Shan.

At 8.30 a.m. the Japanese artillery opened fire, and an artillery duel commenced. Neither side, however, could locate the hostile guns; and the Japanese artillery, turned its attention to the Russian infantry.

At 9.30 a.m. the 15th Brigade was ordered to attack; but it delayed in order to gain the co-operation of the 12th Division. The commander of the latter had, however, early in the morning received information of the presence of a large hostile mixed force at Yen-tai and Ta-yao-pu, threatening his right flank. This was General Orlov's force. Shortly after he heard that the enemy had halted and was entrenching; nevertheless, considering that his right was threatened, he suspended his advance,

<sup>1</sup>The organisation of the *Kobi* or Reserve Brigade differed to that of the active army brigades. It consisted of three regiments each of two battalions.

informing the 15th Brigade that he could not assist it. The latter, however, was by this time too fully committed to break off the attack; and its commander, therefore, decided to continue his advance, merely asking for the assistance of the artillery fire of the 12th Division. At about 9 a.m. General Kuroki was informed of the presence of hostile forces south of Yen-tai Mines; and at the same time he was warned by Imperial Headquarters to avoid being drawn into a serious engagement before he could dispose of considerable forces. He now recognised that the Russians were not retreating, and that his small isolated force was in danger of being attacked by largely superior numbers. His action is characteristic of the Japanese, or of the Germans in 1870. He ordered the 3rd Brigade to cross the river at Yen-chu-cheng; he brought up the 29th Reserve Regiment to the same place as an army reserve; he ordered General Umezawa with the Guard Kobi Brigade to advance from Pen-hsi-hu on the Yen-tai Mines; and he also ordered the 12th Division to cover its flank with its right brigade and to assist the 15th Brigade with its left brigade.

These two brigades, the 23rd of the 12th Division and the 15th of the 2nd Division, assisted by the artillery of the 2nd Division and three batteries of the 12th, attacked Manju-Yama, gradually turning the Russian left. But the Russians had reinforced the troops holding that place with four battalions and three batteries, also posting a detachment about one and a half miles wide of their left to cover the

flank. It became evident to the Japanese that they could not capture the position by daylight. The fire fight reached its height about sunset on the 1st, and about 7.20 p.m. the Japanese assaulted. The Russian commander at Manju-Yama had recognised that a night assault was projected, and had taken steps to meet it. Reserves had been pushed forward in close support of the troops on Manju-Yama, and the detachment on the left flank was strengthened. Five and a half Russian battalions were actually entrenched on Manju-Yama, and were attacked by ten Japanese battalions. A stern struggle ensued, but the Japanese gained a footing on the northern extremity of the hill by 10.30 p.m. The Russian commander in Hsi-kuan-tun for some unexplained reason<sup>1</sup> evacuated the village without being attacked and without informing the troops to right and left of him, while the Russian artillery also retired. The Japanese quickly penetrated into the gap thus formed, taking the defenders of Manju-Yama in reverse. The Russians were now reinforced, and delivered a counter-attack, which was, however, repulsed. The Japanese then entrenched themselves, and awaited the rise of the moon. Between 10 and 11 p.m. the assault commenced. About midnight the Russian commander on Manju-Yama decided to retreat; both his flanks were enveloped; his troops were suffering severely from enfilade and even reverse fire; he

<sup>1</sup>It seems probable that the evacuation of Hsi-kuan-tun was due to the orders which had been issued to the 17th Corps to reconnoitre the enemy but "without having recourse to fighting." See p. 408. "Regrettable incidents" are so often due to foolish orders.

feared that his retreat would be intercepted; his ammunition was almost exhausted, and it was almost impossible to replenish it in the darkness and the thick *Kao-liang*.

The Russian commander also received an order directing him to evacuate the position, and to fall back into a new line of battle from Height 920 to Sha-ho-tun. Thus Manju-Yama was finally evacuated at 4 a.m. on the 2nd. By this success, and by the capture of Wu-ting Shan, the Japanese had gained two "tactical points" which would be difficult and costly to recapture, and which if held successfully would cover the deployment of their troops on the right bank of the river, and enable them to conceal their numbers and dispositions. The Russians, on the other hand, by their retreat, had contracted the area through which the 1st and 3rd Siberians and 10th Corps must move to their line of deployment. The roads through this area were, moreover, blocked by the transport of the 17th and 10th Corps, Mishchenko's and Samsonov's cavalry. The difficulty of deployment would, consequently, be increased, and delays were to be apprehended.

General Kuropatkin regarded the position at Hsi-kuan-tun and Manju-Yama as of vital importance, as the "pivot" of his intended offensive movement. General Bilderling, in reporting the result of the day's fighting at 2 a.m. on the 2nd, made somewhat light of his misfortunes, and failed to explain clearly to General Kuropatkin that his "pivot" had been captured by the enemy. It seems possible that he

himself did not know accurately what had happened ; for the fighting had taken place at night and in the midst of the *Kao-liang*, and the Russian maps were exceedingly bad. He reported merely that a hill to the north-east of Hsi-kuan-tun had been captured by the Japanese ; that his troops being worn out had given way to panic ; that he had informed the 10th Corps ; that he would reorganise during the morning ; and that he hoped to recapture the lost position with the help of his reserves.

During the night of the 1st-2nd General Kuropatkin's attention was diverted to his right flank by the news that large Japanese forces were reported to be moving north from Ma-yeh-tun towards the Tai-tzu ; that there was a large concentration west of the railway, and that a Japanese detachment was moving up the Tai-tzu in boats. He therefore ordered the 1st Siberians to send an infantry brigade, a battery, and a squadron, under General Kondratovitch, to Fort No. 8, on the right bank of the Tai-tzu ; and this detachment was to be strengthened by five battalions of the 5th Siberians taken from the garrison of Liao-yang. This detachment was to come under the orders of General Zarubaiev, who was not, however, permitted to use it for any purpose but that of guarding the river line. Thus the total forces now guarding the Tai-tzu west of Liao-yang consisted of no less than twenty battalions, twenty-one squadrons, and thirty-eight guns. General Kuropatkin also ordered General Zarubaiev to make a demonstration from the western face of Liao-yang, in order to check

the Japanese passage of the river west of the town.

2nd SEPTEMBER, 1904.

At 2 a.m. on the morning of the 2nd General Kuropatkin also issued Army Order No. 4. In it he expressed his intention of holding Liao-yang and attacking the Japanese on the right bank of the Tai-tzu. The 17th Corps was to be the advanced guard, and to hold the line Hsi-kuan-tun—Manju-Yama. The 10th Corps, the right column, was to march at 5 a.m. to Sha-ho-tun. The 1st Siberians, the left column, was to march “at daybreak” to a point about three miles north of Sha-ho-tun. The 3rd Siberians was to march at daybreak to Chan-hsi-tun and form the General Reserve, but was to leave six battalions, two batteries, and two squadrons at Liao-yang. General Orlov, under whose orders were placed Samsonov’s and Orbeliani’s cavalry and Grulev’s infantry, bringing up his strength to twelve battalions, thirty-two squadrons, and thirty-four guns, was to cover the left flank of the striking force, and to march on Kung-Ku-fen, co-ordinating his movement with that of the 1st Siberians.<sup>1</sup> Mishchenko was to remain about two miles west of Sha-ho-tun. The deployment was to take place on the line Hsi-kuan-tun—Yen-tai Mines on the 2nd, and the attack was to be delivered on the 3rd. These orders would result in the deployment, or rather concentration

<sup>1</sup> General Orlov was intended to advance on the 3rd in conjunction with the 1st Siberians; but he did not receive this Order No. 1.

of a force of ninety-three battalions, eighty-four and a half squadrons, and 352 guns, or 57,000 bayonets and 5000 sabres, for the counter-stroke against Kuroki's forces on the right bank of the Tai-tzu. One point, however, strikes us. Three corps, the 17th, 10th, and 3rd Siberians, were to be concentrated one behind the other by the night of the 2nd; and, of the available force, one-half of the 17th Corps, the bulk of the 1st Siberians, Orlov's detachment, and Mishchenko's cavalry only would be ready deployed for battle on the morning of the 3rd. There was, evidently, some idea of striking a "decisive blow" with the 10th Corps and 3rd Siberians.

General Kuropatkin also detailed for the defence of Liao-yang sixty-four battalions, 152 guns, and ten squadrons, while sixteen battalions, sixty-eight guns, and three squadrons were devoted to the defence of the line Mu-chang—1057.

The 17th Corps was directed to "defend energetically" the positions of Hsi-kuan-tun and Manju-Yama, while the 1st and 3rd Siberians and 10th Corps, under the personal command of General Kuropatkin, pivoting on the 17th Corps, were to attack and drive the Japanese into the Tai-tzu River.

To oppose this Russian offensive General Kuroki had on the right bank of the Tai-tzu, in the area Ta-yao—Hsi-kuan-tun—Kuan-tun, the 12th and 2nd Divisions—the remainder of the latter had crossed during the night of the 1st—2nd—the 2nd Guard Reserve Regiment, and the 29th Reserve Regiment; in all twenty-seven and a half battalions, sixty



guns, and six squadrons, or 23,500 bayonets and 600 sabres.

General Orlov had been placed under the orders of General Bilderling, and he had been directed, in the first instance, to cover the left flank of the 17th Corps, to attack the right of the Japanese if they advanced down the Tai-tzu, but to retreat on Yentai Railway station (on the main line) if he himself was attacked by superior forces. On the evening of the 1st, before the capture of Manju-Yama and Hsi-kuan-tun by the Japanese, he received further instructions from General Bilderling. He was told that the 17th Corps had been reconnoitred all day on the 1st by the Japanese. General Bilderling continued: "The Japanese right is actually on the line Kanio—Shang-fen-kou. It is probable that the Japanese intend to attack me to-morrow morning. I request you to move at dawn as early as possible, and advance rapidly to support my left. Success to-morrow will depend on your movement, especially as the Commander of the army has decided to assume the offensive to-morrow against the Japanese troops which have crossed the river." At 8.55 p.m. on the 1st General Orlov replied to the above instructions: "If the Japanese attack the 17th Corps I will assume the offensive; if the Japanese attack me, I request you to assist me and attack them in flank."

Orlov's detachment was at this time posted with its right at Fang-shen and its left at the mines, having seven and a half battalions and twelve guns in reserve at the mines. Samsonov's cavalry was on his

left, and Orbeliani's on his right. The detachment fortified its positions throughout the night of the 1st-2nd.

At 2 a.m. on the 2nd Orlov received further instructions from General Bilderling: "By reason of the offensive which the 17th Corps will assume at dawn on the 2nd against the enemy's positions, the Yen-tai detachment will also assume the offensive at dawn and operate against the right of the enemy." It will be seen that this order gave no hint to General Orlov that the 17th Corps had been driven from its positions at Manju-Yama and Hsi-kuan-tun; and that the offensive of the 17th Corps was simply to be an attempt to recapture them. On these instructions Orlov immediately ordered his detachment to advance at 4.30 a.m. to attack Wu-ting Shan. One regiment was to attack Wu-ting Shan, one regiment was to turn the hill by the west, and one regiment was to remain in reserve behind the left flank. Samsonov's cavalry of nineteen squadrons and six guns was ordered to act against the enemy's right and to cover the left of the detachment; while Orbeliani's cavalry of eleven squadrons and six guns was to act against the enemy's left and cover the Russian right. The guns were to remain in their positions and open fire on Wu-ting Shan. One battalion was to remain as escort to the guns. Thus the 12th Japanese Brigade was to be attacked in front and on both flanks by eleven battalions, thirty squadrons, and thirty-four guns.

The attack was about to commence when Orlov

received the following message from General Kuropatkin : " In continuation of the Operation Order the Commandant of the Army gives you the following instructions : Before all you must gain touch with General Bilderling, and, if the latter is not attacked, you will march in the direction which has been indicated to you. But, if he is attacked on his position at Hsi-kuan-tun, you must march to reinforce him by the shortest route." This message placed General Orlov in a dilemma, inasmuch as neither he nor General Samsonov had received a copy of the Army Order mentioned, that is, the Order No. 4 issued at 2 a.m., and which had directed him to co-ordinate his movement with that of General Stakelberg and march on Kung-Ku-fen on the 3rd.

General Orlov now considered that his instructions meant that he was merely to march to join the 17th Corps, and that he was not to attack the enemy. Fearing lest he should fail to execute strictly the orders he had received,<sup>1</sup> he now countermanded his order for attack, telegraphed to Army Headquarters that he had not received the Army Order mentioned, and sent messages by two different routes to General Bilderling asking for clear instructions, but adding that, if the 17th Corps were attacked, he himself would assume the offensive without awaiting a reply. The point of the whole thing is that General Orlov now considered that he was to march to join the 17th

<sup>1</sup> According to the correspondent of the *Times* in his *War in the Far East* General Orlov had been taken to task in the Boxer Rebellion for the display of initiative.

Corps, but was not to attack the Japanese unnecessarily. We notice this same conception constantly appearing throughout the war—an idea that the object was to occupy a certain locality, and not so much to attack and defeat the enemy. Like the French in 1870, the Russians waged a “war of positions.”

At the same time General Orlov sent a message explaining his intentions to General Stakelberg. Shortly after dawn Orlov's guns opened fire, and were replied to by the Japanese guns on Wu-ting Shan. Then arrived another message, this time from General Dobrjinski, who commanded the division of the 17th Corps which had been engaged on Manju-Yama, to tell him that night fighting had occurred at Manju-Yama, but that it was still uncertain which side held the positions. General Orlov could, however, from his position, see Manju-Yama; and by degrees he became convinced that this hill was in the hands of the Japanese. Fighting which broke out to the westward of Manju-Yama, in the neighbourhood of Sha-ho-tun, finally convinced him, and also led him to believe that General Bilderling was being attacked. Having received no reply from the latter or from General Stakelberg, he decided at about 7.30 a.m. to advance. His march formation was now, however, different. He left two battalions with eight guns, and with the whole of Samsonov's cavalry, except three squadrons, to hold the mines; and he advanced with the remainder of his force, including most of his guns. But his intention was now no longer to attack the Japanese on Wu-ting Shan, enveloping both their

flanks and driving them from their positions. He now proposed to "hold" them by a tentative attack on their front and left flank, and to wriggle past them and make his way towards Manju-Yama. The attempt to wriggle past an enemy who means to fight will generally prove fatal.

Orbeliani's cavalry led the way to reconnoitre the enemy, and was followed by the infantry, with two regiments in first line and one regiment in reserve. The guns, escorted by a company of infantry, were ordered to move down into the *Kao-liang* and find positions from which to support the infantry and fire on the hostile infantry. The cavalry quickly discovered that the Japanese infantry occupied Wu-ting Shan, on which numerous trenches had been constructed, and also the villages at the northern foot of the hill. "Having accomplished its task, the cavalry retired behind the right of the assailants, clearing the front of the infantry, which deployed." Here we have, in a nutshell, the Russian conception of the action of cavalry on the battlefield; and, judging by the casualties, the Russian cavalry appears to have taken no further part in the combat which was about to ensue.

In the meantime General Kuroki, having received reports of the capture of Manju-Yama and Hsi-kuan-tun, and having been informed that the 2nd and 4th Armies hoped to reach the line of the Tai-tzu by the evening of the 2nd, had again concluded that the Russians were retreating and that he had flank guards only to deal with. At 6.45 a.m. on the 2nd he

therefore issued orders to the 12th and 2nd Divisions to capture Height 920 and advance to the line Lan-ni-pu—Lo-ta-tai. The Guard was, if possible, to cross the Tai-tzu and capture Height 1057. The Umezawa Guard Reserve Brigade was to continue its march to Yen-tai Mines. In consequence of these instructions, the 12th Japanese Brigade on Wu-ting Shan received orders to “repulse” the Russian column in the neighbourhood of Yen-tai Mines, and this brigade advanced to attack almost at the same time as General Orlov's troops advanced. Three battalions advanced northward to the east of Ta-yao, two battalions advanced west of that place, while one battalion made a detour to the eastward to attack the Yen-tai Mines. The Japanese guns came into action on Wu-ting Shan, and concentrated their fire on the Russian guns, which had been left on the hills at the mines. These Russian guns were outmatched and quickly silenced, for the Russian guns which had moved down into the *Koa-liang* had lost themselves and could find no position from which to come into action. The Japanese artillery thereafter devoted its attention to the Russian infantry, whose progress could be observed by the waving of the *Kao-liang*. Simultaneously the Russian infantry was violently attacked by the Japanese infantry, and its left flank was gradually enveloped. The Russian infantry also lost its way: they had no maps worthy of the name, and they were in the midst of a dense forest of *Kao-liang*. It is noticeable, however, that the Japanese troops do not appear to have lost their way; but the Russian troops

under Orlov were, for the greater part, reservists of the second category, whose training left much to be desired, and who had but just arrived at the front. The Russian infantry, already heavily engaged with the Japanese, was suddenly subjected to a violent cannonade from one of its own batteries which had discovered an "artillery position" in the *Kao-liang* but which could not, apparently, observe its fire. It had been ordered to fire on the Japanese infantry, but mistook its own infantry for Japanese.

Affairs were in this state at noon on the 2nd when General Orlov suddenly received General Kuropatkin's Army Order No. 4. This order, it will be remembered, directed him to advance on the 3rd, regulating his march on that of General Stakelberg. General Stakelberg had received Orlov's message at 11 a.m., and had replied at 12.20 a.m.—sending copies of the message to A.H.Q. and to General Bilderling—to the effect that he was about to "occupy a position" south of Hsiao-ta-lien-kou in order to support Orlov and the 17th Corps. This message does not appear, however, to have reached Orlov. At 1 p.m., however, another message from General Kuropatkin reached Orlov. In it he was told of the loss of Manju-Yama by the 17th Corps during the preceding night, and was warned to display "extreme prudence." The exact terms of this message are not known; but it seems probable that it was similar to the one which had been sent to General Bilderling, in which General Kuropatkin expressed his fear lest the Japanese should concentrate against

Orlov's detachment. On receiving this message General Orlov decided to retire a short distance in order to occupy a more favourable position. He issued the order to retire at 1.30 p.m., and at the same time he appears to have ordered Samsonov to evacuate the mines. He had estimated the Japanese forces with whom he was engaged at two divisions. The retreat of his raw troops led to a catastrophe ; they got out of hand in the *Kao-liang*, and the retreat finally became a panic-stricken rout. Fortunately a staff officer from A.H.Q. arrived in the nick of time at the Yen-tai Mines and told General Samsonov that the 1st Siberians were about to attack Wu-ting Shan from the westward. General Samsonov decided therefore to hold on to his positions.

General Stakelberg was marching in two columns to the line Fan-chia-tun—Hsiao-ta-lien-kou. His right column had reached the former place at 11 a.m., but his left column did not reach the latter place till 1 p.m. As his advanced guard marched into the village it met infantry and artillery of Orlov's detachment retreating in disorder to the westward.

Let us now turn to the events in the neighbourhood of Manju-Yama.

On receiving General Bilderling's report dated 2 a.m. the 2nd, General Kuropatkin had, at 6.20 a.m., placed the 10th Corps under General Bilderling, telling him at the same time not to engage with superior forces, and that if he could not hold Hsi-kuan-tun, he was to withdraw to a position further back and try to hold it. At 6.30 a.m. General



Kuropatkin mounted his horse and rode off to take personal command of the offensive operations. On his way to the high ground at Fan-chia-tun, at which place he intended to establish his headquarters, he passed the troops of the 3rd Siberians and 10th Corps, who appeared to be fresh and vigorous. At 10 a.m. General Kuropatkin reached his destination. For two hours a cannonade had been heard to the south, east, and north-east, and it was evident that fighting was in progress at Liao-yang, at Manju-Yama, and near the Yen-tai Mines. The Quarter-master-General was sent to Height 920 to make himself acquainted with the situation; and at the same time two staff officers were sent to reconnoitre, and to learn the situation in the direction of Manju-Yama.

At 10 a.m. General Kuropatkin received a report from General Bilderling, despatched at 8 a.m., to the effect that he had re-established order; that the position "to the north of Hsi-kuan-tun" had been recaptured; and that, as he attached great importance to it in view of the projected offensive, he would hold it at all costs. Ekk's brigade, he wrote, was still at his disposal, and the 10th Corps was arriving. He had sent orders to Orlov to advance rapidly, and had received a reply that he would march at dawn. He acknowledged receipt of Army Order No. 4, and stated that he would hold himself personally responsible for the position of Hsi-kuan-tun. At 11 a.m. another report from Bilderling arrived, which had been despatched at 10.30 a.m. "I have ordered,"

he wrote, "the commandant of the 35th Division (General Dobrjinski) to concentrate all possible artillery fire on Hsi-kuan-tun and the hill to the north. When the attack has been sufficiently prepared, I propose to assume the offensive with all the troops at my disposal, or with such as are still available, to occupy the position of Hsi-kuan-tun, according to orders, all the more as it constitutes the pivot of the offensive movement of the army in its wheel to the right." Ten minutes later a message was received from the chief of the staff of the 17th Corps which told the truth, and said that the Russians had been driven from Hsi-kuan-tun and the hill to the north-east, "that is to say, almost the whole line of the positions of the 35th Division," and that these positions were occupied by about six battalions of Japanese, who were entrenching.

General Kuropatkin was naturally somewhat bewildered, and he sent a message to General Bilderling asking him to explain clearly the situation. He now appears to have halted the bulk of the 10th Corps in the neighbourhood of his headquarters as a reserve at his own disposal. At this time also arrived the two staff officers who had been sent to reconnoitre. These reported that small forces only of the Japanese were to be seen at Hsi-kuan-tun and Manju-Yama. Shells could, however, be seen bursting over the Yen-tai Mines, and General Kuropatkin accordingly became anxious for the safety of Orlov's detachment. He now sent a message to Bilderling ordering him to watch carefully in the direction of the Yen-tai Mines,

to gain touch with Orlov, and on no account to permit the last-named to be overwhelmed. He added that it was time to recapture Manju-Yama. At the same time he ordered Mishchenko to march to Hsiao-ta-lien-kou to gain touch with the 1st Siberians. He also sent the following message to General Stakelberg: "The 1st Siberian Corps, when concentrated, will assume the offensive between the 17th Corps and General Orlov; and will, as soon as possible, gain touch with the latter, whose mission is to support the attack of the 17th Corps, for which a special order is about to be issued." He also warned General Orlov to display "extreme prudence," a warning which arrived at a critical moment with, as we have seen, disastrous results. At the same time General Kuropatkin again urged General Zarubaiev to make a demonstration from the western face of Liao-yang in order to attract the enemy's forces and to clear up the situation. He added, "It is necessary that I gain two days."

In the meantime General Bilderling had concentrated the fire of fifteen batteries on Manju-Yama. The Japanese suffered but little from this bombardment; for, having expected it, they had entrenched themselves during the early morning; the troops were, moreover, withdrawn from the trenches, with orders to reoccupy them when the infantry attack commenced. The Japanese artillery made no attempt to reply to the Russian bombardment, as its ammunition was running short, but reserved itself for the infantry attack.

Ten battalions of the 10th and 17th Corps were detailed to execute the attack on Manju-Yama. Of these six and a half were deployed and advanced with difficulty through the thick *Kao-liang*, while thirty-seven battalions, under Bilderling and Sluchevski, were held in reserve.

The six and a half battalions were ready to attack at about 1 p.m., but General Bilderling now appears to have decided that he would defer the attack until the evening, meanwhile making a thorough artillery preparation. Orders appear, however, to have miscarried, with the result that seven companies of infantry assaulted the northern end of Manju-Yama, were beaten back with great loss, and took no further part in the fighting. In this quarter of the battlefield the situation remained unchanged until the evening.

In answer to General Kuropatkin's message asking for more definite information, General Bilderling replied to the effect that, "generally speaking," he was about to attack, and that, having recovered the positions of the previous night, he intended to collect his reserves behind his right and make his "principal effort" to the south-east in the direction of Kuan-tun.

At 1 p.m. the situation was as follows: The 35th Division of the 17th Corps, about nine battalions of the 10th Corps under General Vassiliev, and Ekk's mixed brigade, were deployed along the line on the eastern slopes of 920 to Sha-ho-tun. The bulk of the 10th Corps was in reserve near Fan-chia-tun, close to A.H.Q.

The 1st Siberians were reaching the line Fan-kuan-tun—Hsiao-ta-lien-kou ; its march had been slow and laborious owing to the stifling heat in the *Kao-liang*, and to the delays due to crossing the trains of the 17th and 10th Corps. Its road had also been blocked by the march of General Mishchenko's cavalry.

Mishchenko's cavalry was in the neighbourhood of Fan-kuan-tun. The head of the 3rd Siberians was reaching Chan-hsi-tun. Orlov's detachment was in the area Fang-shen, Ta-yao, Ta-yao-pu, and was commencing its retreat.

Samsonov was at the Yen-tai Mines.

The Japanese 12th Brigade was attacking Orlov. This 12th Brigade, consisting of six battalions, three squadrons, and eighteen guns, was in face of no less than thirty battalions, fifty-seven squadrons, and 100 guns. The Umezawa Reserve Brigade was, however, approaching the Yen-tai Mines.<sup>1</sup> Of the remainder of the Japanese forces on the right bank of the Tai-tzu fourteen battalions were entrenched on the line Hsi-kuan-tun—Matapou, with eight battalions in reserve at Kung-Ku-fen.

General Dobrjinski, who was in charge of the attack on Hsi-kuan-tun and Manju-Yama, had issued orders that a bombardment of the Japanese positions was to be executed between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m.; at the latter hour it was to cease till 4 p.m., when it was to

<sup>1</sup> According to the *British Official History* the Umezawa Brigade attacked Samsonov at the mines about 4 p.m. The *Russian Official History*, however, makes no mention of this brigade, but appears to believe that Samsonov was merely attacked by a detachment of the 12th Brigade.

recommence and continue until 5 p.m.<sup>1</sup> It was then again to cease, and the infantry assault was to commence. The bombardment was not, however, thoroughly carried out, for it was difficult to distinguish between friend and foe; and the general commanding the artillery of the army had ordered the artillery to economise ammunition, as it was running short throughout the army. In all 154 guns took part in the bombardment.

From Army Headquarters the shells which had been seen bursting over the Yen-tai Mines appeared to be bursting further to the westward; the fighting in that direction appeared to be progressing from east to west; but no report had been received. The news from Liao-yang was reassuring, though artillery ammunition was running short. The "offensive demonstration" had been executed by fourteen battalions, sixteen guns, and two squadrons, with a loss to the Russians of 1200 men; but the Japanese movement towards the Tai-tzu, west of the city, had apparently been checked; and all the Japanese assaults on the southern face had been repulsed with great loss to the assailants. The Japanese infantry were entrenching themselves within distances varying from 1000 to 400 yards of the Russian lines. There appeared to be no doubt that General Zarubaiev would be able to hold the city.

<sup>1</sup> It will be noticed that the Russians intended to stop their artillery bombardment for fear of hitting their own infantry. The Japanese, who had gained far greater experience of attack, had, before this period, decided that the bombardment must be continued at all costs until the hostile trenches were captured.

At 1.30 p.m., however, General Samsonov telegraphed that Orlov was retreating, and that he must abandon Yen-tai Mines and retreat on Yen-tai Station. On this General Kuropatkin warned Stakelberg to cover the left of the army in the direction of Yen-tai Mines—Yen-tai Station, that he was not to accept battle with superior forces, and that he was not to advance. He also informed Bilderling of the retreat of Orlov, asked him how it was that the 17th Corps was not in touch with Orlov, and told him that it was necessary to take steps to check the Japanese offensive against Orlov. At about 3.30 p.m. General Kuropatkin heard that Orlov had been attacked by two Japanese divisions.

At 3.45 p.m. he sent a long message to Stakelberg, which it would be as well to quote in full. "You constitute," he wrote, "the left wing of the army during its advance; in consequence of the retreat of General Orlov's column your situation is critical and not without danger. Do not permit the enemy to fall on you with superior forces; you should not, accordingly, advance until you are supported by reserves. You cannot be supported to-day because the reserves are actually concentrated for an important task, the occupation of the Hsi-kuan-tun position abandoned during the night after a combat. The dispositions of the enemy are still insufficiently known, and, in consequence, I cannot yet decide with precision the line along which you will operate. It is very important that you should discover the right of the enemy. Your task will consist in acting against that right. If the

enemy extends too far to the north it will be, perhaps, more advantageous to pierce his line. I leave it to you to decide the direction of your blow, while bearing in mind that our object for the 3rd September is to carry the hostile positions from Kung-Ku-fen to Hantia-la-tzu. Our old position at Hsi-kuan-tun ought to form, so to speak, the pivot of the movement of the army in its wheel to the right. I place Orlov's detachment, consisting of 12-13 battalions, under your orders. I shall probably concentrate the reserve behind the left. In your operations gain touch with the 17th Corps. During the writing of this order I hear with pleasure that Orlov has joined you. Tell him that his detachment is placed under your orders. It is possible that the position Kung-Ku-fen—Hantia-la-tzu is occupied by the enemy as an advanced position; it will therefore be desirable, if circumstances permit, to occupy what may, perhaps, be their principal position on the line\* Kanio—Height at the bend of the Tai-tzu east of Kuan-tun, which probably forms the principal *point d'appui* of the Japanese. Reconnoitre in these two directions."

At this same time, 3.45 p.m. on the 2nd, the remainder of the 10th Corps was sent forward to Sha-ho-tun to reinforce the 17th Corps. The 3rd Siberians remained in reserve ready to reinforce either the 17th Corps or the 1st Siberians.

At this period of the day General Kuropatkin was "visibly disquieted," and he was anxious to know who occupied Manju-Yama, Russians or Japanese. About 4 p.m., however, he appears to have heard definitely



from General Bilderling that Manju-Yama and Hsi-kuan-tun were in the hands of the Japanese ; but he added that he intended to recapture these positions. General Kuropatkin was, however, not satisfied ; and at 5 p.m. he finally placed General Sluchevski in command of all the troops deployed for the attack against these positions, including the 35th Infantry Division, which formed part of General Bilderling's corps, the 17th. The command was already sufficiently involved. General Kuropatkin had, while placing troops under General Bilderling, been issuing orders direct to them. There appear to have been no less than four officers trying to direct the attack at one time. General Kuropatkin told General Bilderling that he was sending up nine battalions of the 10th Corps, that Sluchevski was to command his own corps, the 10th, and that, when the positions were recaptured, they were to be defended by the 17th Corps, while the 10th Corps was to be sent back into reserve for a special mission which was to be executed on the 3rd. This last order appears also to have been given to General Sluchevski, and was to have unfortunate results.

At 6 p.m. General Kuropatkin told General Sluchevski that the attack on the Japanese positions was not to be purely frontal. General Sluchevski, knowing nothing of the situation at the front, placed himself under General Bilderling's orders. He then went forward to make himself acquainted with the situation, but before he arrived the attack commenced. He therefore halted his nine battalions near Sha-ho-

tun ; and sent forward officers to Generals Dobrjinski and Vassiliev to ascertain the state of affairs.

Let us leave the troops of the 17th and 10th Corps about to execute their attack and turn to the affairs in the neighbourhood of the mines and Hsiao-ta-lien-kou.

On arriving at Hsiao-ta-lien-kou with his advanced guard, General Stakelberg had met, as we have seen, disorganised bodies, both infantry and artillery, of General Orlov's detachment. He at once deployed the leading regiment of infantry, and ordered it to attack a hill to the east of Hsiao-ta-lien-kou, which was pointed out to the troops, there being no maps of any value. Another regiment was also deployed in front of Hsiao-ta-lien-kou to stop the Japanese pursuit. The leading regiment advanced as far as Tzu-shan, where it came into action against the Japanese, and commenced to suffer severely.

In the meantime, however, General Stakelberg had sent for General Orlov, and, according to the latter, reproached him for not having sent into action his last remaining battalion, ordering him to take it into action himself. General Orlov asked leave to rally his troops and take them all into action. His request was, however, brusquely refused. He then read a message he had received from the 17th Corps, stating that it would attack at 7 p.m. and requesting the assistance of his detachment.<sup>1</sup> But General Stakel-

<sup>1</sup> See also *Russian Official History*, vol. iii. part iii. p. 298, which confirms General Orlov's account, but does not mention the reading of the message from the 17th Corps.

berg ordered him to go forward immediately and stop the retreat of his troops. Upon this General Orlov placed himself at the head of his remaining battalion; and led it—he himself being on horseback—against the Japanese. He was wounded in many places, his last battalion was practically annihilated, and, as he himself expresses it, my “command was finished.” His command was indeed finished and was making the best of its way to Post No. 8 and along the railway to Yen-tai Station.

General Stakelberg, in his report to General Kuropatkin, states that he met General Orlov’s detachment retreating in utter disorder; and that, in spite of the measures taken by himself, the retreat could not be checked. He continues: “It was only after an order given personally by me to General Orlov to reassume the offensive that the latter returned personally to the line of battle; but he was soon wounded and quitted the field of battle.”<sup>1</sup>

This incident exemplifies the extent to which the strain of battle tells on the nerves. It appears to have been quite unnecessary to send General Orlov and his remaining battalion of reservists to almost certain destruction. Such incidents are doubtless common enough in the history of war; but, as is to be expected, they are far more frequent in an armed force which has discovered its own inefficiency than in one which is everywhere victorious. They are due, primarily, to the irritation which is the result of mental and physical exhaustion and overstrain, and

<sup>1</sup> *Conférences*, vol. iv. p. 109. See also *Russian Official History*.

there appears to be but one thing which can guard against them—the knowledge that a man possesses that, whether he has acted wisely or unwisely, he has at least done his very best. If that be his feeling, the adverse criticism of a superior will not affect him, and neither will he seize the first opportunity to visit his displeasure on a subordinate. It is a question of patriotism and devotion to duty. If these be lacking, adverse criticism will immediately set a man seeking for some subordinate on whom to lay the blame. As a result it is very often the case that some unfortunate junior officer, a captain, or perhaps even a subaltern, is saddled with the whole responsibility for a defeat which is the direct consequence of national inefficiency and incapacity in the leaders.

At about 4.30 p.m. General Samsonov, learning that the advance of the 1st Siberians had been checked, applied to the advanced guard of that corps for assistance. According to some accounts he reported that he was attacked by four Japanese battalions with sixteen mountain guns coming from the north-east; and, according to the British official history, these troops consisted of the Umezawa Reserve Brigade from Pen-hsi-hu. The Russian official history, however, makes no mention of these Japanese troops. It quotes General Samsonov's message as follows: "I request you to inform the Commandant of the 1st Siberian Corps that it is necessary to support me at once, or I cannot hold my position." He added: "I am retiring because the Japanese artillery is violently cannonading my cavalry." It is

therefore yet uncertain whether or no the Japanese Umezawa Reserve Brigade actually attacked General Samsonov. In any case Samsonov waited till 5.30 p.m. He then burnt the stores of forage at the mines and retreated to Ku-chia-tzu. In the meantime two battalions of the 1st Siberians had been sent to reinforce him ; but, finding the mines occupied by the Japanese, they also retreated to a position about a mile and a half to the westward to cover the left flank of their corps. It is interesting to compare the losses which had been suffered by the different portions of Orlov's detachment in this day's fighting. The infantry lost about 1400 men, the artillery five men, Samsonov's cavalry lost fifty-three men, and Orbeliani's cavalry five men.

The Japanese lost 180 men.

Between 4 and 5 p.m. the leading regiment of the 1st Siberians, which had reached Tzu-shan and was suffering severely, was ordered to retire on Liu-lin-kou. The artillery of the 1st Siberians was deployed in front of Hsia-ta-lien-kou ; and half the corps was deployed in front of it, the other half being held in reserve.

At the same hour General Orlov's force, which was being rallied at Post No. 8, was seized with a panic. This unfortunate detachment had been arriving in dribblets, and, as they arrived, General Orlov himself, though wounded, endeavoured to restore order. But one of these bodies arriving from the eastward mistook the troops already there for Japanese, and immediately opened fire on them.

The cry of "the Japanese" was heard, and thereupon arose "a scene of frightful confusion. Two guns opened with shrapnel towards the south-west, where General Stakelberg's transport happened to be parked. Infantry men fired off their rifles in any and every direction, and transport wagons galloped wildly over the plain."<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the deployment of the 1st Siberians in front of Hsiao-ta-lien-kou had checked the advance of the Japanese, who held a line from the mines to Fang-shen.

General Stakelberg reconnoitred the enemy in his front, and decided to attack them by night at the rise of the moon. He reported his intention to General Kuropatkin, but the report did not reach its destination till 10.30 p.m. General Stakelberg claimed the assistance of Mishchenko's cavalry to cover his right flank, but at 5 p.m. that officer told General Stakelberg that his orders were to retire to the west of Sha-ho-tun when he had accomplished his mission of establishing touch with the 1st Siberians. At 8 p.m., therefore, the cavalry marched off to Liu-lin-kou. Thus General Mishchenko, with his twelve squadrons and two batteries, had been within two to three miles of the battleground where Orlov's detachment was routed. He had made no attempt to intervene in the conflict; but had obeyed his orders to the letter and gained touch with the 1st Siberians. He had one man wounded.

General Kuropatkin had received depressing news

<sup>1</sup> *British Official History of the Russo-Japanese War.*

during the afternoon. It had finally been borne in on him that he had lost his "pivot," to which he apparently attached the utmost importance; he had heard that Orlov's detachment had been attacked by a force estimated at two Japanese divisions, that his *point d'appui* on his left flank, the Yen-tai Mines, and his communications were in serious danger.<sup>1</sup> Here was, apparently, a confirmation of his worst apprehensions of a Japanese advance in force from Pen-hsi-hu on Mukden. He knew that artillery ammunition was running short throughout his army, and that though a small quantity was arriving from Harbin, yet that it was quite insufficient for a protracted struggle.

Between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. he saw shells bursting far to the west of the Yen-tai Mines, and it appeared that the Japanese advance must have progressed rapidly towards his vital railway line. He did not know that this firing was the panic-stricken outburst of General Orlov's force, and, indeed, he was not yet aware that Orlov had been seriously defeated. About 6 p.m. he saw the sky redden over the Yen-tai Mines, and at the same time he heard that General Samsonov had retreated from that place. Towards 9 p.m. he received for the first time full details of the capture of Manju-Yama and Hsi-kuan-tun by the Japanese on the preceding night, together with an account of the severe losses suffered by the Russian troops. He

<sup>1</sup> The exact time at which General Kuropatkin received news of General Orlov's utter defeat is not known. The *Russian Official History* merely mentions that it was "sufficiently late at night."

knew that the efforts to recapture these localities had so far been unavailing. He did not know what might have happened to the 1st Siberians, from whom he had received no reports ; but in view of the fact that there were two Japanese divisions about the Yen-tai Mines, and that these were evidently advancing, its situation was probably precarious. The lack of accurate maps and the consequent difficulty of issuing clear instructions, together with the utter impossibility of forming a clear conception of the situation during the hours of darkness, must have increased the difficulty of General Kuropatkin's task a hundred-fold. He had also heard by this time that General Liubavin had retreated to the neighbourhood of Pien-niu-lu-pu, before superior Japanese forces. At 9 p.m. he issued orders to take the necessary measures for the evacuation of Liao-yang, and about the same time he sent another message to General Stakelberg directing him to occupy during the night a position as concentrated as possible, and to get into closer touch with the left of the 17th Corps.<sup>1</sup>

The Commander-in-chief now appears to have gone to Chan-hsi-tun, where his last reserve, the 3rd Siberians, was posted.

We can imagine his relief when, at 10.30 p.m., he received a report from General Stakelberg, in which that officer informed him that he proposed to attack at the rise of the moon. So the 1st Siberians, far from having been beaten, were about to attack ; General Kuropatkin was still apparently unaware of

<sup>1</sup>This message was received by General Stakelberg at 10 p.m.



the rout of Orlov's detachment. Let us consider the vast task which he had set himself to accomplish. He was at this period, so far as we know, issuing orders direct to each army corps in his army, with the exception that General Zarubaiev was in command of the 2nd and 4th Corps in Liao-yang. He was also, apparently, issuing orders direct to each of his numerous flank detachments. He was also, as we know, communicating with the Viceroy at Mukden, and with the Czar and Minister of War in Russia. He was attempting to fight a one man battle after the Napoleonic fashion, seeking to manoeuvre each body of troops himself, to keep himself acquainted with the detailed situation on every part of the battlefield, and, at the critical moment, to strike a crushing blow. He allowed less latitude to his commanders than was the habit even of the great Napoleon ; but, unlike the latter, he was unable to see the whole battlefield, which was thirty miles in extent ; and neither was he able, owing to the smokeless powder and the *Kao-liang*, to distinguish between friend and foe. He was dependent on bursting shells and the reports of subordinates for his knowledge of the situation. He had set himself a task immeasurably more difficult than any that the great Napoleon had ever undertaken. He required an "eagle-eye" with a vengeance—an eagle-eye in an aeroplane !

When did he find time to eat and sleep ? After all, men, even generals, cannot live without food and rest !

Let us leave him for the moment, merely recognising that here must have been an overworked man with a vast weight of responsibility\* on his shoulders, a man mentally and physically fagged, one whose nerves were not calm and peaceful like those of the critic in the arm-chair. Victory depends as much on the powers of endurance of the Commander-in-chief as on those of the rank and file. It depends, therefore, on his ability to husband his powers of endurance by delegating his authority to subordinates. This ability General Kuropatkin did not, apparently, possess.

The Russian force available for the attack on Manju-Yama and Hsi-kuan-tun consisted of seven battalions, under General Ekk, on the right; thirteen battalions of the 10th Corps, under General Vassiliev, in the centre; and six battalions of the 17th Corps, under Colonel Istomin, on the left. The attack had been prepared by the fire of 152 guns which had bombarded the Japanese positions since 2.15 p.m. In reserve at Sha-ho-tun were the remaining nine battalions of the 10th Corps. The remaining battalions of the 35th Division of the 17th Corps had apparently been inextricably mingled in the previous fighting. A part of the 3rd Division of the 17th Corps was still posted away to the south, overlooking the junction of the Tai-tzu and Tang Rivers, and facing the Japanese Guard Division, which was making attempts to cross the river.

Shortly after 6 p.m. General Ekk's battalions occupied Hsi-kuan-tun, which had been evacuated

by the Japanese; but an attempt to storm the southern slopes of Manju-Yama was roughly repulsed. The bombardment continued until 7 p.m., when it was becoming dark. Manju-Yama was still held by the 15th Japanese Brigade, which had been reinforced by one regiment of the 3rd Brigade. Shortly after 7 p.m. the Russian assault commenced, but General Ekk's battalions do not appear to have taken part in it. In the darkness the Russian troops quickly fell into confusion; men fired at their comrades, and even attacked each other with the bayonet.<sup>1</sup> Finally, however, the Russian line reached the top of the ridge, which was only about twenty yards wide, and hurled hand grenades into the Japanese trenches. But the Japanese fire was too much for them, and the Russians retreated. They halted at a short distance from the crest; and, "under cover of the intense darkness, some Russians crept up the slope, threw some magnesium balls connected by string on to the crest line, ignited them, and retired. Heavy volleys were then poured into the Japanese trenches now brilliantly lit up. The defenders tried to extinguish the light by throwing stones at them, but without success. Then one man dashed forward, shouting his name and regiment, according to the Japanese custom, and put out the light with the butt of his rifle. In spite of the rain of bullets he returned unhurt."<sup>2</sup> Severe hand-to-hand fighting

<sup>1</sup> On one occasion when the Japanese were about to deliver a night assault, and when it was feared that they might fail to distinguish between friend and foe, the men were told to attack all big men.

<sup>2</sup> *British Official History.*

ensued, and in the darkness, rendered the more impenetrable by the *Kao-liang*, both the Russians and the Japanese found it necessary to sound the "cease fire" as the only means of getting the men in hand. Two Russian battalions of the same regiment were engaged in a bayonet conflict at Hsi-Kuan-tun, and the band was called on to play the regimental march in order to put a stop to it. In other quarters of the field the Russian troops sang the national anthem as the only means of distinguishing between friend and foe. The "cease fire" caused many groups of Russian reservists, who had lost their officers, to retreat; and these, arriving at Sha-ho-tun, led General Vassiliev to believe, and to report, that the attack on Manju-Yama had been repulsed. Nevertheless the bulk of the Russian troops continued the attack with the utmost bravery. At about 9 p.m. the Japanese holding Manju-Yama were reinforced by a battalion of the 12th Division, which was on their right. Another Russian assault was delivered, which was repulsed; and yet another and another, until about 11 p.m. the Japanese were driven down the eastern slopes of Manju-Yama. General Bilderling, on hearing of this success, hastened to report the recapture of his chief's "pivot." He was immediately called to a personal interview with General Kuropatkin to receive instructions for the 3rd. He was told that his corps was to defend passively the recaptured positions; while General Kuropatkin himself would march with the 1st and 3rd Siberians to throw Kuroki into the Tai-tzu. General Kuropatkin

was now confident of victory, and exclaimed, at the termination of the interview, "I will not retire from Liao-yang; Liao-yang shall be my monument." He and his staff now set to work to prepare orders for the offensive movement.

But though Generals Bilderling and Kuropatkin were unaware of the fact, the Russians were by no means masters of Manju-Yama. The Japanese, indeed, deny that they were ever really driven from the trenches. Here is their story.

The Japanese assert that they gave the Russians no time in which to establish themselves, but assaulted in their turn, driving the Russians out of the hard-won trenches. Again at 2 a.m. the Russians assaulted, but it was then getting light, owing to the moon, and two Japanese battalions were led forward against the Russian left flank. On this unexpected attack the Russians broke finally and retreated to Sha-ho-tun.

According to the Russian story, however, the troops of the 10th Corps, which had assisted to recapture Manju-Yama, were ordered to retire, because the corps was to be formed up in reserve for the next day. The retreat of these troops led to the retreat of the troops of the 17th Corps, and Manju-Yama was evacuated peacefully at 2 a.m. But whichever story is true, the fact remains that Manju-Yama was in Japanese hands by 2 a.m.

In the meantime how was General Stakelberg's attack progressing? It was to have been delivered at moonrise. But during the afternoon it appeared to General Stakelberg—probably owing to the tem-

porary cessation of the bombardment of Manju-Yama—that the 17th Corps had broken off its engagement. Yet General Orlov had read to him a message from General Bilderling that he intended to attack at 7 p.m.<sup>1</sup> The Japanese fire in his front had become intensified, which led him to believe that the enemy had been reinforced. The mines had also been evacuated, and the left flank of the 1st Siberians was consequently exposed.<sup>2</sup> One of his regiments had suffered severely. The bulk of his troops was exhausted. He had been directed by the Commander-in-chief to concentrate his troops carefully for the night, to rally General Orlov's troops, and to approach the left of the 17th Corps. He had also been warned to avoid a serious engagement with superior forces. For these reasons he had decided at about 6 p.m. to discard his projected attack and to retreat to a more favourable position. He therefore drew back his corps to the neighbourhood of Liu-lin-kou.

Let us now, again, turn to General Kuropatkin. At midnight the situation, as we have seen, appeared to be as follows :

The Japanese attacks on Liao-yang had been repulsed with great loss.

General Bilderling, with the 17th Corps, had recaptured Manju-Yama.

<sup>1</sup> According to General Orlov's own account, that is.

<sup>2</sup> A detachment of the 1st Corps had been despatched to support General Samsonov. This detachment, with General Samsonov's cavalry, were now posted about Ying-kuan-tun, two miles north-west of the mines.

General Stakelberg, with the 1st Corps, had reached Hsiao-ta-lien-kou, and had expressed his intention of attacking the high ground from Wu-ting Shan to the mines during the night.

The situation, according to the *Russian Official History*, appeared to be by no means unfavourable, and General Kuropatkin intended to press his offensive.

On the 3rd the 10th Corps and the 3rd Siberians were to move to Pa-kuo-shu and Hung-yeh-tzu respectively. The 1st Siberians was to be concentrated at Hsiao-ta-lien-kou, and was "charged with the defence of the direction mines of Yen-tai—station of Yen-tai. It will resist as much as possible without engaging against superior forces before the arrival of reinforcements."<sup>1</sup>

The 17th Corps was to maintain its positions to cover this movement.

Mishchenko was to keep touch between the 17th Corps and the 3rd Siberians.

General Samsonov was to maintain his position and protect the left flank of the army.

The Commander-in-chief intended to join the 3rd Siberians and attack the enemy.

There are three points we notice in these instructions. The first is that General Kuropatkin was evidently unaware that the bulk of the 10th Corps had been heavily engaged at Manju-Yama during the night, and that it would be a difficult operation to withdraw it and move it to a flank. The misappre-

<sup>1</sup> *Russian Official History*, vol. iii. part iii. note No. 64, p. 543.

hension was probably due to the fact that General Bilderling, commanding the 17th Corps, had reported that Manju-Yama had been recaptured by troops of the 17th Corps "before the arrival of the fractions of the 10th Corps sent to support me." He had, however, added that one brigade of the 10th Corps was holding the recaptured positions and could not be withdrawn without risk of losing the position.

The second point is that the 3rd Siberians and 10th Corps might have been moved to these positions of assembly on the preceding day, and thus much valuable time would have been saved. The force for the offensive movement was only now about to deploy for battle.

The third point is that the 1st Siberians were charged with the defence of a line apparently facing north or north-east; and the points to which the 3rd Siberians and 10th Corps were to move indicate that General Kuropatkin intended to execute his offensive in a northerly or north-easterly direction. It seems evident that General Kuropatkin believed that large Japanese forces had already reached the Yen-tai Mines.

3rd SEPTEMBER, 1904.

Orders to the above effect had just been issued when, at 3 a.m. on the 3rd, a report arrived from General Zarubaiev stating that he had been heavily and continuously attacked both by day and night, that he had the equivalent of but three battalions left in reserve, and that so small a reserve was



entirely inadequate. He demanded leave to bring across the river General Kondratovitch's detachment, which was standing inactive at Fort No. 8. He also reported that artillery ammunition was running short, especially in the 2nd Siberian Corps.

General Kuropatkin was given about forty minutes in which to digest this unpleasant news, which told him that it was doubtful whether he could gain the two days he required for his offensive, when a message was received from General Stakelberg.

"I report that my situation is serious, and that, in consequence of the severe losses suffered by my regiments during the last five days, I not only cannot, without serious reinforcements, assume the offensive, but cannot even accept battle. I have therefore resolved to retreat this night on Liu-lin-kou, where I will await fresh orders." <sup>1</sup>

At the same time another message was received from General Bilderling. He reported that his troops had again been driven from Manju-Yama, Hsi-kuan-tun, and Sha-ho-tun, that his advanced troops were now in front of Erh-tao-kou, and that his reserves were at that place. He added that he would not be in a position in the morning to hold "the pivot of the offensive movement," and that he would be forced to retreat.

In addition to this report, it appears that it was at this moment that General Kuropatkin received full details of the utter defeat of Orlov's detachment, and, according to his report to the Czar, it was also at this

<sup>1</sup> *Conférences*, vol. iv. p. 118. See also *Russian Official History*.

time that he received a report from General Liubavin to the effect that that officer had retreated to within twenty miles of Mukden.

On General Bilderling's message General Kuropatkin inscribed a note with a red pencil in great characters: "Very unfortunate. But since Stakelberg also has retreated, I must decide to retreat on Mukden and beyond. Concentrate there, reorganise and advance."

The reasons for this momentous decision are given in the *Russian Official History*, and are taken from the report rendered by General Kuropatkin to the Czar immediately after the battle.

"The occupation by the enemy of the Heights of Yen-tai, barely nine miles from the Mandarin road and the railway, placed the Russian line of communication in great peril if the Japanese continued their offensive movement. The Japanese forces in this locality could not be exactly determined; General Orlov estimated them at about two divisions. This estimate was believed to be fairly accurate, for it had been concluded from the official report on Kuroki's strength that, on the 2nd September, the 1st column of his army, itself broken into three columns, was concentrated in the neighbourhood of the Yen-tai Mines. This column, probably a third of the whole of Kuroki's army, which was believed to number seventy-six battalions, would probably consist of two divisions of twelve battalions each.

"It was difficult to foresee the manner in which the enemy would operate; but, judging from the

disordered retreat of Orlov's detachment ('reports of which arrived at this moment'), it was to be concluded that the enemy, who had occupied with success so important a position, would profit by the favourable circumstances to develop his offensive. In the course of the 2nd September the situation had changed to the serious disadvantage of the Russians; in losing the position of Hsi-kuan-tun they were deprived of a *point d'appui* on the right bank of the Tai-tzu and of a base from which to operate against Kuroki. The 1st Siberians, by its retreat on Liu-lin-kou, had laid open the Russian communications. The fate of Liao-yang inspired fear, for artillery ammunition commenced to give out throughout the army, and it was not possible to reinforce Liao-yang with other troops. Lastly, other fears arose from the movement of the enemy, who advanced from Pen-hsi-hu by the direct road to Mukden. The hostile forces in this direction had not been determined with any precision, and the feeble detachment of General Liubavin (two and a half battalions, fourteen squadrons, and twelve guns) could not oppose serious resistance to an enemy superior in number.

"From the observations made during the fight of the 2nd September it could be concluded that General Kuroki had not engaged the bulk of his forces, and he could employ them to turn the Russian left, either in the direction of Yen-tai Station or along the road Pen-hsi-hu—Mukden."<sup>1</sup> Finally, the troops had come to the end of their

<sup>1</sup> *Russian Official History.*

powers of endurance, and were no longer fit for offensive operations.<sup>1</sup> In this situation, as General Kuropatkin explained, it was necessary to decide whether to continue the struggle on the Tai-tzu or to abandon Liao-yang and to retreat towards Mukden to the fortified positions on the left bank of the Hun Ho. It was still just possible, with clever manœuvring by the Commander-in-chief and his subordinate generals, and with extreme efforts on the part of the troops, to throw back Kuroki on the Tai-tzu; but in order to accomplish such a feat it would be necessary to withdraw the corps already on the right bank of this river, and to deploy them further to the north with a view to attacking the Japanese in flank at the Yen-tai Mines. Such a movement would, however, leave the 17th Corps isolated, and, in case of its defeat, would lay open the rear of the garrison of Liao-yang. That garrison could hardly be expected to hold out for the required length of time against the combined attacks of the 2nd and 4th Japanese Armies.

A retreat on Mukden, on the other hand, "presented great inconveniences and dangers." It would withdraw the Russian field army further from Port Arthur; it would lead to a retreat pressed in front and flank by a victorious enemy. The state of the roads, in consequence of the continuous rain, rendered it doubtful whether the enormous convoys, or even the artillery, could be withdrawn to Mukden. The retreat—an admission of defeat—would reduce the morale of the Russians and increase that of the Japanese.

<sup>1</sup> *Conférences.*

Nevertheless, a successful retreat would enable the Russians to escape from a very dangerous position. It would gain time for reinforcements (the 1st European Corps) as well as the necessary ammunition to arrive. Finally, the experience of the 2nd September had demonstrated the necessity of deferring offensive operations until the *Kao-liang* crops should have been cut.

Both the Viceroy and the Commandant of the Army sent lengthy reports of the battle to the Emperor. An unpleasant feature of the Viceroy's report is that he threw the blame on to the shoulders of everybody but himself, as though he, the Commander-in-chief, had had no hand in the defeat of the Russian forces. Bilderling was blamed for his failure in not having opposed the passage of the Tai-tzu; Orlov was blamed for his "inopportune offensive"; the commander of the division which executed the "offensive demonstration" from the western face of Liao-yang was blamed for sacrificing 1200 men "without any object"; and the Commandant of the Army by no means escaped censure. The Viceroy emphasised the necessity of holding Mukden; that the Japanese had been unable to capture this important city even in 1894 from the Chinese; that its capture, following on the battle of Liao-yang, would be a great triumph for the Japanese, would increase their prestige throughout the Far East, and especially with the Chinese. It would defer the date of the relief of Port Arthur, would enable the Japanese to capture that stronghold rapidly, and thereafter turn their

attention to Vladivostok, which place was not fitted to make a determined resistance. "To the question I put to him relative to Mukden," continued the Viceroy, "the Commandant of the Army has made an evasive reply, saying that he will only take a decision after a detailed inspection of the positions and according to the actions of the enemy. I dare not disguise from Your Majesty that, in my opinion, the continued retreat on Tieh-ling and beyond will not prove favourable to the morale of the army; it requires a success as soon as possible, and it is important to eradicate from the minds of the chiefs of the army the exaggerated fear of the envelopment of the flanks, thanks to which our successes are transformed into defeats terminated by retreats. It is equally important to ask of the supreme command more decision and a greater confidence in the dispositions taken. I venture, in conclusion, to submit to Your Majesty whether it would not be of value to the good of the service to authorise me to go to St. Petersburg to report personally to Your Majesty on the situation in the theatre of war."<sup>1</sup>

In justice to the Viceroy, however, it is necessary to add that his report was written after an interview with General Kuropatkin. General Kuropatkin's report gave a summary of the events of the battle. He praised most highly the conduct of the troops, except in the solitary case of Orlov's detachment. He also terms Orlov's advance an "inopportune offensive"; but he also mentions that Orlov was wounded, and

<sup>1</sup> *Russian Official History*, vol. iii. p. 394.

that his men fought under the gravest difficulties. He concludes with the words, "Such is the report which I address, very humbly, to Your Majesty." In a further report, however, submitted after his arrival at Mukden, General Kuropatkin ascribed his defeats to the incapacity of his subordinate commanders—Zarubaiev at Ta-shih-chiao, Sluchevski on the 31st July, Orlov, Liubavin, and others. There was no hint in his reports that he himself was in any way to blame. General Floug, Chief of the Staff, on the other hand, reported that the defeats were due to the incapacity of the supreme command.

Of course there is nothing new in this sort of thing; it is as old as the hills; there are many precedents. Joshua, under-estimating the strength of the men of Ai, and anxious, doubtless for political reasons, to avoid mobilising the whole fighting strength of Israel, despatched too weak a force against Ai, and neglected to maintain secrecy. The men of Ai, accordingly, laid an ambush for the men of Israel, and smote them hip and thigh. Thereupon Joshua, assisted doubtless by the priesthood, asserted that a sin had been committed in Israel. So it had, but not by poor Achan, who had merely stolen a little "loot" in the previous campaign of Jericho. Achan was, however, taken, and, together with his whole family, put to death. The sin having been wiped out of Israel, Joshua mobilised the whole force of the Israelites—30,000 men in place of the 7000 he had formerly employed—and with these he, in his turn, laid an ambush for the men of Ai, and utterly destroyed them and their

city. But the point is that the miserable Achan has been held up to opprobrium in every school throughout Christendom for nearly two thousand years as a wicked scoundrel who drew down the wrath of the Almighty on his countrymen ; while the noble-minded Joshua is held up as an example of a statesman and a soldier. It seems that the custom so neatly improvised by Joshua has not yet died out, but in these days of education and knowledge it is unlikely to prove as efficacious as of yore.

One account of the battle quotes a passage from one of General Kuropatkin's reports which is not mentioned in the Russian official history, but which is, nevertheless, of considerable interest. " My communications with Mukden being threatened by considerable Japanese forces, I am retiring my army to that place, as its first duty is to protect these communications." The Czar's answer is also quoted : " From your reports of the fighting at Liao-yang I appreciate that it was impossible for you to have held that position longer without risk of being completely cut off from your communications." Thus, there seems to be little doubt that the decisive blow in this battle was the threat against the Russian communications ; and, in view of the small forces actually employed by the Japanese for this purpose, the threat was, in reality, a blow at General Kuropatkin's nerves.

As we now know, the situation was by no means so serious as it appeared to General Kuropatkin, as will be seen by a comparison of Maps Nos. 13 and 14



There were no Japanese troops on the road from Pen-hsi-hu to Mukden with the exception of the Kobi Brigade. The 12th and 2nd Divisions were almost as exhausted as the Russian troops, for they had put forth equal if not greater efforts. These two divisions were entirely unsupported on the right bank of the river; and the nearest reinforcement was the Guard Division, which was separated from them by two rivers and a mountainous and almost pathless tract of country. If General Kuropatkin had but known the true situation, he would, without doubt, have directed the 3rd Siberians, which were comparatively fresh, and the remainder of the 10th Corps against the left of the 12th Division and the right of the 2nd, while the 1st Siberians attacked the right of the 12th Division. It is nevertheless questionable whether these troops, in spite of their numerical superiority, could have succeeded against those magnificent fighters, the Japanese.

But it was not to be; General Kuropatkin decided to retreat. We have seen his reasons for his decision. He considered that the advantages to be gained by a partial victory at this period would not compensate for the risks of a decisive defeat. Even though he defeated Kuroki, he could but drive him back over the river. He might inflict heavy punishment on him—nothing more. For even if fortune assisted and brought the river down in flood to wash away the bridges, and to render the fords impassable, still, Kuroki's forces were believed to be so powerful that there was no hope of beating him decisively. On the

other hand, if General Kuropatkin's information were true, the Russian army would be lost unless it retreated forthwith.

The Russian retreat was admirably conducted as usual. Surely the Russian army must have been most carefully trained in peace time to retreat. Perhaps the subalterns and captains in their promotion examinations had invariably been set rearguard or convoy defence schemes, which usually involve retreat or passive defence.

Shortly after 4 a.m. on the 3rd General Kuropatkin issued his orders to retreat. General Zarubaiev was to retreat at once up the railway to Yen-tai Station, destroying the bridges over the Tai-tzu. He received these orders at 7 a.m., and had already commenced to withdraw when he was ordered to hold on to his positions till nightfall. This he accomplished successfully, though the Japanese established a footing in the defences at one point.

The 1st Siberians were to occupy a position astride the branch railway at Post No. 8, with General Samsonov's cavalry on its left.

The 3rd Siberians were to prolong this line to the south to Liu-lin-kou. The 17th Corps, the rearguard, was to occupy the line Shih-cho-tzu—Chan-hsi-tun.

General Mishchenko's cavalry was to fill the gap between the 3rd Siberians and 17th Corps.

The 10th Corps was to become the army reserve and to take post behind the centre of the line at Pa-kuo-shu. The transport was directed on Mukden and Sha-ho.

These orders were executed without molestation by the Japanese. The 12th Division was too exhausted for offensive action, so also was the 15th Brigade of the 2nd Division. The latter was replaced in its positions by the 3rd Brigade of the same division. There remained the 29th Kobi Regiment, which was still sufficiently fresh for offensive operations, but nothing could be accomplished with so small a force. There was, moreover, great difficulty in supplying the troops on the right bank of the Tai-tzu. The Guard Division had been altogether unable to effect the passage of the river in face of the 17th Corps. General Kuroki, who had believed that the Russians were retreating when in reality they were about to strike at him, now, when they actually were retreating, recognised that he had the bulk of the Russian army in front of his small force, and not merely, as he had thought, a rear or flank guard. He therefore urged the Guard Division either to get across the river or to send a brigade by the shortest route to the Japanese bridges at Kuan-tun, and in the meantime he ordered the 12th and 2nd Divisions to stand on the defensive until the Guard could bring pressure to bear on the Russian right at Height 1057. The Guard commander, however, expressed his inability both to effect the passage of the river and to draw off his troops by daylight, but sent his reserve of two battalions instead of a brigade. This reply only reached General Kuroki at 5.45 p.m. on the 3rd, and he thereupon ordered the whole of the Guard to march at once to the bridges and cross the river.

The tracks over the mountains were, however, so bad that a night march across them was impossible, and the Guard was forced to make a wide detour by An-ping. The leading troops of the Guard only reached the bridges at 6.30 p.m. on the 4th.

The evacuation of Liao-yang had been carried out successfully during the night of the 3rd; and, the bridges having been destroyed, the Japanese pursuit was checked until fords could be found. It was as well for the Russians that these delays occurred in the Japanese pursuit, for the 2nd and 4th Siberians, which had been in their trenches for three days and nights, were worn out. The Japanese, however, were content to seize points on the right bank of the river, for their troops also were utterly exhausted by their efforts.

An artillery engagement occurred between the 17th Corps and the 2nd Japanese Division during the 3rd, but otherwise there was no fighting in this quarter of the field. Throughout the day the Russian retreat continued unmolested. It was, however, extremely fortunate for the Russians that the Japanese did not possess a powerful force of cavalry. They still possessed a few battalions of infantry able to march and fight, and we can imagine the result if on this or the previous day a Japanese cavalry division, supported by these battalions and the Kobi Brigade, had attacked General Samsonov and seized the road and railway north of Yen-tai. In view of the exhausted and demoralised condition of the Russian troops, it seems probable that the appearance of a powerful force of hostile cavalry would have

given rise to a panic which, in its turn, might have converted the partial defeat into a decisive rout.

During the night of the 3rd-4th, however, the Guard *Kobi* Brigade, which, it will be remembered, had on the 2nd attacked Samsonov and seized the Yen-tai Mines and had then returned to drive off General Liubavin, attacked that officer's force on the Mukden road due east of Shih-li-ho, and forced him to retreat towards Mukden as far as Tun-chia-fen.<sup>1</sup> General Liubavin sent a report of his retreat, asking for reinforcements, which reached General Kuropatkin early on the morning of the 4th. He was considerably disturbed by it, and made a note on it as follows: "In other words, General Liubavin is within a march of Mukden. The situation is disquieting. I desire to be more fully informed." Reinforcements were immediately despatched to General Liubavin both from the army and from the troops at Mukden.

It is interesting to note the effect of the movements of this Reserve Brigade of four battalions, a battery, and a squadron on General Kuropatkin's nerves. First, it marches from Chiao-tou and attacks General Liubavin at Pen-hsi-hu on the 31st and 1st, a distance of about fifteen miles; then it suddenly appears at the Yen-tai Mines and attacks General Samsonov on the afternoon of the 2nd, a distance of twenty miles. It returns again to drive off General Liubavin, a distance of ten miles, on the 3rd. It follows him up and attacks him again at night, a

<sup>1</sup>Seven miles north-west of Pien-niu-lu-pu and about eighteen miles from Mukden.

distance of about eight miles. It then at once returns towards the railway to attack General Samsonov on the 4th, again about eighteen miles. It must have covered about seventy miles<sup>1</sup> in five days in addition to its fighting, over a country in which roads were practically non-existent. It appears to have been a stupendous performance. And these were "Reserve" or "Territorial" troops!—but troops which had been fully trained in the active army and whose training had not ceased when they joined the reserve. These Japanese reserve troops were, if possible, finer than the troops of the first line, and in this respect they were in startling contrast to the reserve troops that Russia put into the field.

It would seem to have been, primarily, the movement of this *Kobi* Brigade, combined with the exaggerated reports from subordinate Russian officers and the false information probably circulated by the Japanese, which was responsible for General Kuropatkin's fears for his line of communication. This *Kobi* Brigade was exaggerated into two divisions at the Yen-tai Mines, and an unknown but powerful force on the Mukden road. And it was that fear for his line of communication which induced him to retreat in place of pressing his offensive. In the operations of this Reserve Brigade we have an illustration of the value of feints combined with false information, as well as of the value of remarkable marching and fighting powers in troops. This

<sup>1</sup>That is, as the crow flies; the actual distance covered was probably nearer 100 miles.

mobility, this marching power, is indeed the foundation of military efficiency; without it, and without powers of endurance in his troops, the best general is helpless.<sup>1</sup>

4th SEPTEMBER, 1904.

On the 4th the Russian retreat continued, and was practically unmolested, except for the attack on General Samsonov by the ubiquitous Umezawa *Kobi* Brigade. General Umezawa had been reinforced by the 29th *Kobi* Regiment, bringing his strength up to six battalions. The attack was not, however, pressed. The Japanese troops were probably exhausted, and their mere appearance at this point had probably effected the object aimed at. The Japanese forces were in a dangerous position; their troops were separated and exhausted. Time was essential in which to reorganise, to bring up supplies and reinforcements to replace casualties. A Russian offensive at this juncture would still be a serious matter. Even as late as the morning of the 4th, Headquarters of the 1st Army was still, apparently, in ignorance of the Russian retreat, so admirably had it been conducted. The best means to check a Russian offensive was to threaten the Russian communications. Hence it might prove sufficient if the *Kobi* Brigade could

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to compare the action of this Japanese detachment with the inaction of the Russian flank detachments. These latter had been ordered to "cover the flanks and line of communication"; they, accordingly, expected to be attacked by overwhelming numbers, and, when attacked, resisted passively or retreated, believing that the Japanese force opposed to them was a mere advanced guard, followed by powerful forces.

make an appearance in front of General Samsonov, for choice in the afternoon, and thereby convey a serious threat for the night and following morning.

The appearance of the *Kobi* Brigade did indeed have the effect which was, undoubtedly, designed. General Samsonov was hastily reinforced until his strength in infantry, in addition to his own cavalry and to that of General Gurko, amounted to fifteen battalions. The Japanese maintained a fusillade until midnight. The Russians were extremely nervous lest they should be attacked in force at this point. Information had, moreover, arrived of the presence of Japanese troops further north—a short distance east of Shih-li-ho. It seemed more than ever evident that Japanese forces were moving on Mukden; and the troops of the 5th Siberians which were with the army were hastily despatched by rail to rejoin the headquarters of their corps at that place. The troops of the 1st European Corps were also detrained at Mukden as they arrived.

By the evening of the 4th the Russian army had practically extricated itself from its dangerous situation, though it was not aware of the fact. The 1st and 3rd Siberians still held their position facing east astride the branch line from Tu-men-tzu on the north to Liu-lin-kou on the south. The 10th Corps had reached Yen-tai Station. Immediately to the south of it were the 2nd and the 4th Siberians. The 17th Corps held a rearguard position facing south and south-east about Pa-kuo-shu. General Mishchenko's



cavalry maintained touch between the right of the 3rd Siberians and the left of the 17th Corps.

The retreat was continued on the 5th without molestation, except that the *Kobi* Brigade still continued to threaten the left of the 1st Siberians, while the 2nd Japanese Division brought some guns into action against Yen-tai Station. The 2nd and 12th Japanese Divisions had been ordered at 1.30 p.m. on the 4th to pursue to Lan-ni-pu and Ta-ta-lien-kou respectively, and the appearance of the Japanese infantry caused a slight panic in the Russian rear-guards. General Kuroki had, however, been warned not to push on too fast, for the bulk of the 2nd and 4th Armies were still south of the river. Marshal Oyama had recognised that his enemy had escaped.

The Russians continued their retreat on the 6th and 7th to the line of the Hun Ho, their movements hastened by reports of a Japanese advance on Fu-shun, to the eastward of Mukden.

The Japanese remained in their positions, the 2nd and 4th Armies south of the river, the 1st Army on the right bank. Each army pushed forward a mixed brigade a few miles to its front, which occupied and entrenched a line of villages.

The Russians collected their forces in and around Mukden, with detachments at Ta-wan on the west and Ying-pan on the east, and with a cavalry screen running east and west through Shih-li-ho.

In these positions the hostile armies remained facing each other and making preparations for the next great contest.

The Japanese losses from the 23rd August to the 5th September were over 5000 killed and 18,000 wounded, while the Russians lost about 2000 killed and some 14,000 wounded. The Russians had successfully withdrawn all their guns and transport; Liao-yang had been burned, and but little fell into the hands of the Japanese.

On hearing of the retreat from Liao-yang the Czar decided (on the 6th September) to form a second army in Manchuria, of which the 6th Siberians was to form the nucleus. Both armies were to be under Admiral Alexiev, the Viceroy.

#### COMMENTS.

Thus was fought the great but indecisive battle of Liao-yang, in the midst of the rains. It will be remembered that the Japanese Imperial Headquarters' order had informed the army commanders that the battle must be deferred until after the rainy season. We wondered whether, perchance, the Russians had received a copy of this order. At the very moment that the Japanese were about to attack, the Russians arrived at the conclusion that their enemies intended to stand on the defensive, and, having debated the question long and seriously, they themselves decided to hold their advanced positions with a view to the assumption of the offensive. The decision appears to have roused differences of opinion between the Commander-in-chief and his subordinate leaders. The Russians were forthwith attacked, their left flank was turned, their positions became untenable, and

they were forced to give way. No opportunity for a counter-stroke had revealed itself to General Kuropatkin. At this juncture General Kuropatkin, if he had altered his plans, reverted to his original intention, and sought to draw the Japanese into his "zone of manœuvre" and get them separated by the Tai-tzu River. The retreat to the main positions was admirably executed, but it exhausted and still further demoralised the Russian troops. Being again attacked in their main positions, the exhausted and demoralised Russians required almost every man in their front line to repulse the Japanese. The fear lest the Japanese should penetrate at this or the other point, or envelop this or the other flank, or intercept the Russian communications, required that the gaps should be filled, the flanks extended, and closely watched and guarded. The efforts of the Commander-in-chief to keep a reserve of fresh and vigorous troops for his counter-stroke thus proved unavailing; neither could he determine the "direction of the principal effort of the enemy." He, nevertheless, obtained one corps with which to delay the Japanese turning movement on the right bank of the river—supposing they undertook it—and thus gain time in which to retreat within the bridge-head defences and accumulate the necessary striking force.

The Japanese did undertake the turning movement on the right bank of the river, as had been foreseen; and the moment they were reported in force on that bank General Kuropatkin endeavoured to execute the latter part of his programme. The retreat

within the bridge-head defences was again admirably conducted by night, and it was only due to their energy that the Japanese discovered it as soon as they did.

When Marshal Oyama heard of it he appears to have been somewhat perturbed, recognising the danger to that portion of his force on the right bank of the river. He warned General Kuroki, but that officer, labouring under a misapprehension, pressed on in a very bold offensive. It was this bold offensive which brought General Kuropatkin's plans to nought. He had decided to devote two days to the accumulation and deployment of his newly formed reserve, and on the third day the blow was to be struck. But in the meantime his advanced guard, the portion of the 17th Corps and Orlov's detachment which were to cover the deployment of his reserves, succumbed to the Japanese offensive; and it became necessary to reinforce the advanced guard with any troops which were available. Before the reserves could be deployed their flank was turned and their line of retreat threatened by the small, but fully deployed, Japanese force. The Russian troops were exhausted by their efforts; artillery ammunition was running short, and General Kuropatkin, extremely anxious for his communications, decided to retreat while there was yet time.

Thus General Kuropatkin's plan failed. Yet it will be generally admitted that his original idea was a clever and simple conception. General Kuropatkin proposed to compensate for his supposed inferiority of force by a more clever application of it. Unfortunately his intelligence system was defective; his

information was, consequently, bad ; he was misled and induced to change his plan at the last moment. He was soon forced to revert to his original plan ; but his "shaken" army was now not quite good enough for the tremendous task it was called on to execute. He nearly, if not quite, succeeded in outwitting his adversary ; but he was too slow ; and, in the end, he was himself outwitted, while his troops were out-marched and out-fought. It was superior power of endurance as much as anything which finally decided the conflict in favour of the Japanese—endurance on the part of the Commander-in-chief as well as in the troops. In this connection it must be remembered that it was the Commander-in-chief who issued the order to retreat. A general will always continue the struggle until his fear of destruction overmasters his desire to win victory. In this case it was the threat at Mukden and the Russian line of communication which caused the overmastering fear of destruction. Yet that threat was imaginary. It was the result of false information to which the semblance of reality was given by the clever manœuvres and hard fighting of a small detachment. It was that that affected General Kuropatkin's nerve.

There are those who maintain that the Russian cavalry could have cleared up the situation had it been used boldly with that purpose in view, but that the Russian cavalry failed generally to obtain accurate information because it was ill-trained, uneducated, and lacking in the "cavalry spirit." That may be so ; though it is difficult for any but a cavalry-man to

grasp the exact nature of the expression "cavalry spirit," just as it is difficult for any but a Greek scholar to grasp the exact meaning of the expression "Greek spirit." Nevertheless, we may be pardoned for displaying some scepticism as to the capacity of the finest cavalry in the world to discover, towards the end of August, the truth of the constant reports that the 2nd Japanese Army was sending troops to reinforce the besieging Army at Port Arthur. If a powerful force of cavalry had been sent out with this object in view, it must have ridden round, or broken through, the 2nd Japanese Army. Can it be questioned that it would have gone to certain destruction; and that, in acting thus, Kuropatkin would have acted exactly as the Japanese wished him to act? Or, if he had pushed forward a body of all arms to secure the retreat of his cavalry, he would have given the Japanese the one opportunity of all others which they desired—the chance of beating him piecemeal, seizing his communications behind him, and bringing him to a decisive battle.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the Russian cavalry might have accomplished far more than it actually did accomplish, especially in reporting the strength of the Japanese forces which crossed the river at Pen-hsi-hu. Everything, however, tends to show that General Kuropatkin hoped to surprise his adversary by a sudden attack along the right bank of the Tai-tzu Ho. To push forward a large mass of cavalry to gain information would serve to give the enemy warning. General Kuropatkin, rather than warn

his adversary or risk the defeat of his cavalry, preferred perhaps, to trust to his powers of divination. He divined wrongly; his staff arrangements were indifferent; his troops were worn out, and he was beaten.

It is a fate which commonly befalls all but great leaders; but a similar fate awaits the leader who lacks the courage to act on probabilities, the courage to trust to his powers of divination, but who must always seek to obtain accurate information before he commits his force. Such an one is always too late.

In this connection arises a point which we cannot overlook. Our study of the past is quite valueless unless we seek to apply it to the future. To what extent would the new fifth arm, air-craft, have simplified the respective problems of the Russians and the Japanese? Let us suppose that each had been equipped with fleets of efficient air-craft at the outset of the war. These fleets must, inevitably, have fought out a struggle for the mastery of the air, and that which won would thereafter have possessed accurate information, while the one that lost would have fought in the dark.

If the Japanese had been the fortunate possessors of this accurate information, they would not have held the 4th Division in reserve on their left. They would have taken measures to push the whole of the 1st Army across the Tai-tzu Ho, and they would have avoided giving General Kuropatkin the opportunity to overwhelm a portion of their forces. Their victory might well have proved decisive. If, on the other hand, the Russians had possessed this accurate

information they would, perhaps, have avoided the defeat on the Yalu and at Telissu; Ta-shih-chiao might have been a victory; they might well have defeated one of the Japanese armies, for they would have known the strength of the Japanese forces. At Liao-yang they would have known that the Japanese possessed no reserves. If General Kuropatkin had still executed his project of separating the hostile forces and overwhelming one portion, his blow could have been prepared and executed against a blind adversary; he would not have been misled by the threat against Mukden; and he would not have drawn back and retreated just at the moment that victory was within his grasp. His troops would have displayed vastly more endurance had they known that the hostile forces were numerically much inferior to themselves.

Nevertheless, it is still a question whether the 12th and 2nd Japanese Divisions would not have held their own until the arrival of reinforcements, or until the defence of Liao-yang broke down.

We can estimate that, in future wars, that side which has won the mastery of the air will obtain complete and accurate information. That side which has been defeated in the struggle in the air will, nevertheless, obtain more information than in the past by means of a few aeroplanes which will manage to elude the hostile air-fleets. It will, however, be chiefly dependent on the time-honoured methods of obtaining information—divination, spies, cavalry, reconnaissance in force, and infantry patrols. These



latter, therefore, cannot be put aside as worthless, inasmuch as mastery of the air will depend on battle in the air, and the result of that contest cannot be foreseen.

But perhaps the knottiest problem of all in connection with aerial warfare is the method in which aerial fleets will manœuvre against one another. Will it be an advantage to get above the adversary ; will the wind-gauge give an advantage ? Something quite new will arise, something which has never yet existed in warfare, inasmuch as the aerial forces engaged will be deployed for battle on a vertical as well as a horizontal plane. Thus a converging fire can be brought to bear from above and below as well as from right and left. In aerial tactics converging fire will be, more than ever, the dominant idea.

Measures of security must include detachments thrown out above and below as well as advanced and flank guards. The aerial fleet of the future will certainly include heavy fighting and rapid scouting craft ; and it is possible that the system of "protective" and "independent" bodies, as exists in the cavalry of to-day, will be adopted ; or that the fleet will be organised after the fashion of a sea fleet, with its battleships, cruisers, and scouts.

But, in the meantime, it is as well to recognise that aerial fleets manœuvring against each other will attempt but little in the nature of reconnaissance of the earthworms below, that their operations may well take them to a distance of a hundred miles from the fighting on earth, and that armies would

be foolish indeed to neglect the methods by which information has been sought and obtained in the past.

It is noteworthy that when the Russian left flank was turned in the battle in the An-ping positions their defence immediately collapsed. In the final struggle, the moment they believed their flank to be turned, envelopment imminent, and their lines of communication threatened, their defence collapsed.

At Ta-shih-chiao the Russians held out without difficulty, but the moment they feared that their flank was about to be turned and their retreat intercepted their defence collapsed. At Telissu, the moment their flank was turned they discarded their offensive operations, which held out great promise of success, and retreated.

At Nan-shan the Russian defence collapsed the moment its flank was turned. So at the Yalu.

Is it true, then, that the flank of an army is its vital point, and that the moment its flank is turned its defence will collapse? It will be said that the Russians were an exceptional case.

At Liao-yang a local counter-attack was delivered against the left of the 10th Japanese Division. It was very effective; out of all proportion to the size of the force which executed it. Again, a local counter-attack was delivered on the extreme left flank of the Japanese. It also was most effective. Mere threats against this flank induced the Japanese to retain in reserve a whole division, and to discard their enveloping movement west of the railway line until all danger of counter-stroke had disappeared. Yet

the most savage and determined frontal attacks usually proved ineffectual.

Is it the case, then, that an armed force will, the moment its flank is turned, discard its offensive and think primarily of defending itself—on that flank, at least?

In every battle of 1870 the French defence practically collapsed the moment the flank was enveloped, and thoughts of victory were discarded in favour of retreat. When retreat was impossible, as at Sedan, then there occurred vigorous efforts, born of despair, but not to win victory, merely to break out.

As we have seen, Hamley says that that army whose flank is the more immediately threatened will conform to the movements of the other, that is, will discard its initiative, and turn to defend itself. Von Caemmerer asserts that an army whose centre is pierced will nevertheless win victory if it can envelop the hostile flanks. Von der Goltz asserts that an attempt to pierce the centre resolves itself to-day into an operation of a "boring nature"—a prolonged operation, which no longer shatters an army, but merely bends back its centre slowly. If this be true, it is evident that the envelopment of a flank, which is calculated to win victory instantaneously, is infinitely more effective than an attempt to pierce the centre, which is unlikely to be successful, and which, in any case, takes time. Napoleon is generally accused of being the great exponent of the operation known as "piercing the centre." But it seems to have been forgotten that at some of his

great battles, such as Wagram and Ligny, his blow with his reserves at the hostile centre was carefully timed to coincide with the envelopment of the hostile flank; and that it was directed, not so much at the centre, as at that wing which was enveloped.

It will be said—but this is a thing that everybody knows; that a flank attack is a thousand times more effective than a frontal attack, just as converging fire is a thousand times more effective than mere frontal fire. It leads up, however, to another point. If the envelopment of the hostile flank is the object to be aimed at, the wisdom of holding in hand a powerful reserve with a view to a “decisive blow” is certainly open to question. The Japanese, we observe, have up to this period held back reserves, so far as we can see, solely as a measure of security; while the Russians, on the other hand, have displayed a remarkable solicitude to keep back reserves, with the result that they have attempted to fight their battles with but a portion of their available force. It must not be forgotten that any force, call it what you please, which is kept out of the combat is a detachment whose services are, for the time being, lost to the army. Why is it that in naval battles we never hear of reserves? Simply because the whole hostile force being clearly in evidence, there is no need to guard against unforeseen contingencies.

But perhaps this question of reserves may receive further elucidation as we progress in our study of this war.

In his original plan—the one to which he reverted

—General Kuropatkin adopted what is apparently the only possible method by which the weaker force can hope to defeat the stronger. He induced the stronger force to divide, and then he sought to overwhelm one portion. Such was the underlying conception of most of the successful so-called defensive-offensive battles, such as Austerlitz, Salamanca, and Fredericksburg, and of the great naval battles, such as the Nile and Trafalgar. The essence of this conception is to mislead and surprise the enemy and to concentrate all available force against a portion of the hostile force.

The conventional idea of a defensive-offensive is the very reverse of this conception. Far from seeking to separate and overwhelm a portion of the enemy, it puts forward a portion of its own force to withstand the concentrated efforts of the whole hostile force. It is true that this conception proposes to strike a "decisive blow" with its General Reserve when the assailant is exhausted. Unfortunately, the assailant is invariably far less exhausted than the recipient of the blows. It is more wearisome and demoralising to guard than to strike. The almost inevitable result is that the General Reserve is employed, not in a "decisive blow," but in a forlorn attempt to rescue its hard-pressed comrades, who naturally clamour for assistance, or to cover the retreat. Or, like General Kuropatkin, the commander holds back his reserve until the "direction of the principal effort" of the enemy can be discovered, that is, till too late.

There are certainly instances of successful defensive-offensive battles fought in this fashion, such, for instance, as Vimiera, Albuera, Waterloo, and Gettysburg; but we would do well to notice that, in each case, the victor was superior in numbers to his assailant. With a considerable superiority in numbers a general can afford to subject a portion of his force to the hostile sledge-hammer blows with the object of making an opening for the employment of his "mass of manœuvre," but it is hardly a method which will commend itself to the commander of the weaker force. In this case also, the essence of the whole thing is to mislead and surprise the enemy, to induce him to come forward and attack a force which is much bigger than he thinks.<sup>1</sup>

But further light may, perhaps, be thrown on this point by the later battles of the war.

General Kuropatkin was called upon during the night of the 3rd September to face a sufficiently difficult problem—whether to continue the struggle in the hope of partial victory and risk destruction, or admit defeat and save his army. Which of these courses should he have adopted? Napoleon has something to say on this matter. Writing to his

<sup>1</sup> In this connection Moltke's tactical problem, No. 50, is of great interest. In his solution he recommends the adoption of our stereotyped defensive-offensive method. But it is to be noted that the force he is concerned with, which is one army corps engaged with one hostile army corps, has been reinforced, unknown to the enemy, by a whole cavalry division. Obviously, if the enemy can be misled in this fashion, one cannot do better than draw him forward to ground of one's own choice, get him fully committed, and then attack him.

brother Joseph, King of Spain, after Vittoria, he said, "To be repulsed when one has 12,000 men in reserve who have not fired a shot, is to put up with an insult." Napoleon takes a somewhat personal and selfish view of it, the point of view of the reputation of the general. Nevertheless, was he not right? The defeat of an army, even though it be indecisive, inexorably leads to further defeats, and finally to decisive defeat, unless large reinforcements of well-trained troops can be brought up. Hence, it is usually worth while to seek for victory even at the risk of utter destruction, and therefore to use the last reserves, the last round of ammunition, and the last ounce of effort in the attempt to win even a partial victory—that is, if powerful reinforcements are not likely to become available. If, however, such will shortly be available, is it not rather foolish to risk destruction in the hope of winning a partial victory? For the destruction of the army may rouse popular feeling, and so force the hand of the Government and oblige it to make peace on perhaps disastrous terms. That was the case with the Russians at this period. The political situation in Russia was very serious at this time, and the annihilation of Kuropatkin's army would, almost without doubt, have proved decisive of the war. But, then, it will be argued, in that case it surely would have been wiser not to have fought at all at Liao-yang. That is true enough, it is fatal to fight except with the express intention to win or to be destroyed. It is the only frame of mind in a general which renders victory possible. That is the

whole point of this war. General Kuropatkin fought against his better judgment. His action was due to the pressure from above which had been brought to bear.

There are those who glibly say that General Kuropatkin was wrong to retreat, that he was lacking in "character," in "determination," in "tenacity," in "grit," that it was too soon to discard hopes of victory, that all that was necessary was a bold and resolute offensive.

Moltke has lauded "character" in a leader at the expense of knowledge. It is, to say the least of it, remarkable that a man who had so profound a belief in the value of "character" should have devoted so much time and hard work to the education in strategy and tactics of the Prussian General Staff. It is noticeable that the Austrians in 1866, the French in 1870, ourselves in 1899, and the Russians in 1904, all prided themselves on their "character." Men who lack the application necessary for the attainment of knowledge will usually pride themselves on their character; it saves so much time and trouble which can thus be devoted to more congenial pursuits—to sport or games, for example, which are supposed to form character. Or the man who, though very stupid and ignorant, is the fortunate possessor of an aquiline nose or a prominent chin, will often pride himself on his character. As a matter of fact it is impossible for a man to possess character—military character, that is—without knowledge. Alvensleben's display of character at Mars La Tour, or Nelson's at St.



Vincent, would have been quite impossible unless the knowledge had been there to tell these two great leaders what to do and how to do it, together with the courage to enable them to act on their own responsibility. The strongest character will break down when his nerve is affected, just as the weakest will hold out until his is affected. True, the man in ill-health or exhausted will give way sooner than the man of "iron nerve"; he will more easily lose his head if surprised. But it is foresight, the outcome of knowledge, which averts surprise. Knowledge serves as armour to cover the nerves; ignorance is the joint in the armour through which the hostile shaft pierces. Will mere "strength of character," as it is called, enable a man to distinguish between true and false information? It is to be feared not. Rather is it a well-organised intelligence system and the power of divination, together with the knowledge which tells a man the wisest, and therefore the most probable, course that the enemy will adopt. The "iron nerve" so constantly lauded in the great leaders was chiefly due to the self-confidence born of knowledge.

Between three and four o'clock in the morning a man's vitality is at its lowest, and his nerves are most easily affected. This was the time at which General Kuropatkin received a series of disastrous reports. Let us imagine this man, who for months had been subjected to a severe mental strain which had culminated in some nine days and nights of extreme tension, snatching his food and sleep as best

he could—days and nights of constant misfortunes; a man who, in his efforts to reconcile his plans with the orders or “suggestions” of superior authority, had brought on himself the ill-concealed and passive—or at times open—opposition of his subordinates. It was perhaps due to this fact that he attempted to take personal command in every portion of the field, or was it perhaps due to the fact that he was constitutionally unable to trust subordinates? Or perhaps it was merely his training in the Russian army, or, again, perhaps it was his knowledge that his subordinates were untrained to think for themselves and to act on their own initiative. Whatever may have been the cause, certain it is that throughout the war he was eternally issuing orders as to points of detail or to the subordinates of his corps commanders. He could not, or would not, trust his subordinates. He stood alone with a vast weight of responsibility on his shoulders. All his plans had quite suddenly collapsed. Is it to be wondered at if he discarded hopes of victory and sought solely to save his army? In view of the situation, as it presented itself to him, was he wrong?

It is one thing to think out a problem in a comfortable chair, with ample pens, ink, paper, admirable maps, and plenty of time available, with the true facts carefully marshalled by numerous historians, the numbers and positions of the opposing forces well known. It is altogether another thing to think out a real problem of real war in a moment of great emergency, with the nerves on edge, with the staff

waiting for the decision—an immediate decision—ignorant even of the position and state of one's own forces, without any definite information as to the positions and movements of the enemy, but with much hopelessly conflicting information as to his numbers, positions, and intentions; with but two or three definite pieces of knowledge, that the enemy means to destroy your army if he can, that his is a vastly superior force, that his morale is high, that your own is low, that he has been uniformly successful and that you have uniformly failed, that he is master of the crafts and stratagems of war, and that you, who have always thought yourself such a fine fellow, a man of such "character," have suddenly discovered that you are ignorant and helpless as a child in his hands.

It is this unwritten history of war, this battle of wits between the hostile commanders, which it is so essential to study. The vanquished has almost invariably been outwitted, and therefore surprised, by the victor, but either he cannot recognise the fact or he refuses to admit it. He prefers to find other causes for his defeat—the incapacity of his subordinate leaders, the inefficiency of his troops, the unforeseen misfortunes, the underhand blows of chance, the mountainous country, the *Kao-liang*—anything but his own incapacity to penetrate the designs of the hostile leader. Hence it is that, if we wish to ascertain the true conditions of these problems, we must read between the lines of histories and endeavour to ascertain the information on which a leader acted,

and to imagine the frame of mind by which he was possessed at the time. It is not the victor in modern war who is called on to solve problems of so intricate a nature as that with which General Kuropatkin had to deal. He owes his victory largely to the perfection of his preparation and to the efficiency of his armed force. It is the vanquished on whom the task devolves—the nation which has neglected its preparation, which has failed to thrash out its national problems or which has taken a rosy view of them, which has consequently failed to recognise the theatre in which hostilities will occur, which has dreamed that the war will take place in hostile or neutral territory instead of which it takes place in its own, which has therefore failed to prepare the theatre, neglected to establish an intelligence system, neglected to ascertain the transport and supplies available, neglected to organise and train its forces with a view to its war, and whose forces are—as is always the case with the unprepared nation—inefficient.

There are but few men now in the whole world who have any experience of solving problems in circumstances of real difficulty—not the Germans nor the Japanese, for these nations were everywhere victorious. Not the British in South Africa, for they fought an opponent who lacked discipline, training, organisation, and leadership, who could not even attack. A certain number of Frenchmen perhaps, and the Russians, for these have experienced the meaning of war against the two most efficient machines of war that have, so far as we know, ever

existed in the world. These two nations now know what it means to be outwitted and surprised on the outbreak of war. British soldiers and sailors would do wisely to study this aspect of war, for, in view of Great Britain's habitual unreadiness for war, they too will probably, before many years are passed, be called upon to face, in similar circumstances, problems such as those the Russians and French were called on to solve.

It would be well to bear in mind that this "concentration of superior force at the decisive point," which brings victory, whether on sea or land, depends primarily on the power to surprise; for the enemy's whole desire is to put into execution this principle of success himself, and to deny to you the opportunity. The power to surprise depends on the power to mislead the enemy. Is it desired to strike the enemy while asleep? Then he must be misled and lulled to sleep. For he will not go to sleep if he expects to be attacked. Is it desired to strike the enemy from behind? Then he must be induced to look the other way. For he will not look in the wrong direction if he can help it.

Those who preach platitudes, clap-trap, as to "playing cricket" to the enemy, do but small service to their country. They would do well to study war and to look at realities. Cricket is a game which men play, not so much to win as for the sport of it. War is deadly earnest; there is no sport in it; the one desire is to win at all costs and by any means. In the modern wars of 1866, 1870, and 1904 the

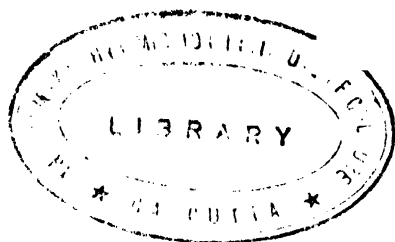
defeated were misled and brought to the verge of defeat by the victor before ever a shot was fired and in the midst of profound peace. It is said that such a conception of war involves the "blackest treachery" towards a friendly power. But it is the only possible conception of war that can be formed from a study of modern history.

If a nation considers it probable that its interests are vitally antagonistic to those of another nation, and if that other nation be a modern military nation in arms, it would do well to watch most closely lest it be misled in the midst of profound peace as to its opponent's preparations and efficiency, and, not less, to avoid optimism as to its own capacity for war.

Some 200 to 300 villages, besides one city, appear to have been involved in the battle of Liao-yang; large numbers of these must have been destroyed by bombardment, fire, or the fighting which occurred in and around them; all of them, and numbers more in addition, must have suffered severely from the requisitions, or perhaps the depredations, of the troops. History does not trouble to mention villagers or their sufferings except when the attitude of the inhabitants has a direct bearing on the progress of the struggle. It is not a pleasant idea that if by chance an invasion of the British Islands became an accomplished fact, vast numbers of villages, a good many towns, and innumerable country residences would be left in ruins. Large numbers of the inhabitants would starve, their property would be destroyed, and they themselves subjected to cruel indignities. And this would be

the result of one battle with 150,000 men on each side. A few such battles would transform a large part of England into a desert. It is well for a nation to prevent all possibility of invasion if it can be prevented. The British nation trusts to its navy. Its trust may not be misplaced—who can say? It is the unexpected which occurs in war. If the British navy were by ill fortune to suffer defeat at the hands of a great Continental Power, invasion in great force would follow within a few weeks, for the regular British army is insignificant in numbers, while the Territorial army is quite insignificant by reason of lack of training. It would be wise of the British nation to ensure that it possesses a highly trained army of such a strength as will enable it not only to execute its imperial duties oversea, but also to drive into the sea hostile forces, whatsoever their strength, before they can establish themselves on shore.

The argument against such an army is that, with the defeat of our navy, we should starve in any case. That opinion is open to question; but, be that as it may, starvation alone is certainly preferable to starvation and invasion combined.



# APPENDIX I.

## RUSSIAN MILITARY SYSTEM IN 1904.

	NUMBERS.	PERIOD OF SERVICE.	ORGANISATION.	NOTES.
ACTIVE ARMY	1,100,000	5 years between ages of 21 and 26.	In 29 Army Corps, together with numerous independent Cavalry Divisions, Rifle Brigades, etc.	Each Army Corps in Europe normally consists of 2 Divisions, each of 2 Brigades, each of 4 Battalions, with 6 or 8 Batteries and one Engineer Company. The Siberian Army Corps, similar to above, except that each regiment consisted of 3 Battalions. Each Cavalry Division consisted of 2 Brigades (each of 2 Regiments, each of 6 Squadrons), with 12 Horse Artillery guns.
RESERVE	2,400,000	7 years between ages of 26 and 33. Received 2 weeks' training a year while in reserve. Between ages of 33 and 39. Received no training while in reserve.	Liable to be absorbed into Active Army on mobilisation. Men of the 2nd Category were employed in the Russo-Japanese War.	Reserve units (Battalions and Brigades) existed in peace time and were expanded to war strength by more Reservists. Many such units, composed solely of 2nd Category Reservists, fought in the war.
COSSACKS	345,000	Serve under special conditions.	In Divisions and Bri-	
NATIONAL MILITIA	685,000	Up to 43 years of age.	Unorganised. Liable for Home Defence.	Composed of men who have served in Active Army or Reserve, and who were therefore trained. Composed of men exempted from service, and who were therefore untrained.



## APPENDIX II.

## JAPANESE MILITARY SYSTEM IN 1904.

	NUMBERS.	PERIOD OF SERVICE.	ORGANISATION.	NOTES.	
STANDING ARMY	Active Army.	180,000	3 years between 20 and 23 years of age.	In 13 Divisions, 2 Cavalry Brigades, 2 Artillery „	Each Division consisted of 2 Infantry Brigades (each of 2 Regiments, each of 3 Battalions), 1 Cavalry Regiment, 1 Engineer Battalion, and 36 guns; or 13,000 combatants, together with 5,500 non-combatants.
	1st Reserve.	200,000	4½ years; after completing service in Active Army.	Absorbed into Active Army on mobilisation to bring it up to war strength.	Each Cavalry Brigade consisted of 2 Regiments, each of 4 Squadrons, or 1,100 sabres. Each Artillery Brigade consisted of 36 guns.
	2nd Reserve (Kobi)	200,000	5 years; after completing service in Standing Army.	In 13 Brigades, each of 3 Regiments, each of 2 Battalions.	May be called out for 60 days' training a year during Reserve service.
CONSCRIPT RESERVE	(1st Term	50,000	7½ years; between 20 and 27 years of age.		Composed of men not required for Active Army. Receives 90 days' training in 1st year and 60 days' during 3rd and 5th years. Liable to be called up to make good deficiencies in Active Army.
	2nd Term (untrained)	250,000	1½ years between 20 and 21 years of age.	Unorganised.	Untrained.
NATIONAL ARMY	1st Part	4,000,000	All men not in above between ages of 17 and 40.	Unorganised.	1st Part composed of trained men who had served in Standing Army or 1st Term of Conscript Reserve.
					2nd Part untrained.













